



UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

CON 5037Z – RESEARCH REPORT

**A STUDY TO ESTABLISH THE POSSIBLE IMPACT
VALUE MANAGEMENT CAN HAVE ON THE
BRIEFING STAGE OF PROJECTS IN THE
ADVERTISING INDUSTRY.**

AS A PART REQUIREMENT FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE DEGREE:

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN PROJECT MANAGEMENT
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DECLARATION

I confirm, that the contents within this research report to be my own work with the exception of all specifically identified and directly referenced works of others.

It is being submitted for the degree of Masters in Science in Project Management at the University of Cape Town.

I further confirm that no part of this thesis has been submitted in whole or in part to any other institution, academic or otherwise.

Alon Lichtenstein

Signed at _____ on the _____ day of _____, 2009

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ABSTRACT

The advertising industry is one that is barraged with problems that are found both within the agency environment and within the client-agency relationship. The problems identified have been categorised, by this report, into the areas: the agency environment that has changed due to technology; the inner-workings of the agency network; and the client-agency relationship.

This research report focuses on the briefing stage of the advertising projects with a view to study the management process used to achieve clarity therein, in an endeavour to better understand problems the agency environment faces.

Further, this study explored if an alternate method, Value Management (VM), can be implemented during the briefing stage of advertising projects. The effects were assessed and a further examination conducted to assess if the use of VM can remedy some of the problems facing the agency environment.

As VM is designed to improve the value of a particular product offering, its application should positively impact on both advertising agency projects and client-agency relationships.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

The following chapter summaries this research report. It does so by explaining the background of the report in terms of the advertising industry; some of the problem areas in the industry; and the rationale for utilising Value Management (VM) as an opportunity to assist in diminishing some agency problems.

Thereafter the research problem, the key research questions, guiding proposition and objectives are presented. This is followed by a summary of the research method, after which the scope and limitations are stated and finally the report structure is foreshadowed.

1.2. BACKGROUND

The background is shown in terms of the advertising industry, then some problem areas are expressed, after which VM is presented as a possible opportunity to remedy some problems.

1.2.1. ADVERTISING

The advertising industry is highly specialised, focusing on a specific aspect of marketing: promotion of the company, product and/or service (from here on "product"). This (promotion) helps drive competition among companies (Belch and Belch, 1990). Thus, due to advertising's specialisation, the work is conducted independently of the company by a third party service provider (an advertising agency) to assist the advertiser (the client) (Arens and Schaefer, 2007).

Historically, advertising services were of a creative nature, but today the agency concept is spread across a gamut of services including, *inter alia*, research and media planning (*Business Definition for: advertising agency*, 2000). The service provision relationship, as stated above, addresses product promotion in the best manner. Through objectivity, agencies are able to use their collective skills in the most effective way to captivate the target audience, in the hope that this will increase product sales, which is the underlying rationale for advertising (Belch and Belch, 1990).

Advertising, over time, develops the client's corporate identity, internally and cultivates a brand, externally (Belch and Belch, 1990). Further, if implemented correctly, it is, in fact, a long-term investment through positively influencing sales, and not an expense, as

commonly regarded. To this end, agencies need to carry out (for clients): (1) identification and differentiation of products from others; (2) communication of product information, features and sale location; (3) customer induction of product purchase/re-use; (4) stimulation of product distribution; (5) increase product use; (6) build value, brand preference and loyalty; and (7) lower the overall cost of sales (Arens and Schaefer, 2007).

To achieve this, the agency assigns a host of agency-employees to serve as participants on the project, generally including: an Account Manager who manages the business aspect; Research and Account Planners who design an advertising plan; Media planners and buyers who engage the placement of the advertisement; Creatives who create the advertisement; Production to create the physical advertisement from the Creatives' vision; Traffic Management to regulate the flow of advertising projects; and Administration to manage the operations of the agency (Arens and Schaefer, 2007).

A generic 5-stage model is necessary to achieve success (Sinclair, 1997). Stage 1: client meets with the agency to explain the campaign and present a brief, where only the key participants (agency and project dependant) are involved. Stage 2: using the information from 'Stage 1', an advertising brief is created which needs client approval. Stage 3: post-approval, the brief is divided into a creative brief (for the Creatives) and a media brief (for the Media team), the briefs are then finalised with requisite commitments. Stage 4: the Account Director meets with the project team to design the best solution(s) collectively, and then draft and present their findings to the client for final pre-production approval. Stage 5: after the final pre-production approval, the campaign goes into production where more resources are attached, and, upon completion, sent to the client and aired/distributed via the selected media.

1.2.2. ADVERTISING PROBLEM AREAS

In the advertising industry, there is much difficulty within the agency as well as between clients and the agency. The follow section introduces some of the problem areas facing the advertising industry.

1.2.2.1. Technological Developments' Impact on Advertising

Historically, the products which advertising companies delivered were something that could only be done through talented, creative individuals with expensive machinery (Treffeletti, 2007). These products, were also 'guaranteed' to clients as the solution to make these products more profitable.

Today, however, this advertising 'magic', has faded. This is due to the rapid development of technology, which has significantly simplified the ability for almost anyone, prepared to learn to operate a computer in a specific manner, to create advertising solutions (Treffeletti, 2007). Moreover, discusses Lace (1998), the cost of such a feat is not expensive, and well within a barrier to entry. This has naturally resulted in a higher volume of competition, many of which have few overheads, and can operate at an exceptionally lower rate relative to established companies, continues Treffeletti (2007). As this knowledge is freely available and relatively easy to find, clients of established agencies also know that much competition exists (*ibid.*). Thus, being empowered via the knowledge of competitor presence, clients have become more price sensitive and find any excuse to be dissatisfied with work, where many complaints are associated with price (*ibid.*).

The results have been twofold, firstly, the agency has needed to drop fees to stay competitive which has made them less profitable, and, secondly, agencies have found themselves debating effectiveness of solution to cost with clients, which was hardly ever the case historically (Treffeletti, 2007). The latter has bred a sense of required accountability attached to advertising solutions, find Gladman and Melsom (2005), which has taken the industry into a realm of conservatism, in order to deliver promised results. This has hindered much advertising creativity, the reason for which agency inhabitants' entered the industry, initially. They are, thus, most often, frustrated with a limited creative scope in which to operate (*ibid.*).

1.2.2.2. Internal Agency Problems

Within an advertising agency, there are many varied disciplined individuals, working together to produce products. Although many agencies punt their 'creative philosophies', West and Ford (2001) argue that identifying exactly what this means is very difficult. Moreover, Kover *et al.* (1995) state that these theories are implicit and not cognitive to others. Thus, believes Hackley (2001), many 'part-theories' exist in different departments within the agency environment, which for the most part define individuals' cognition of the world. Therefore, these 'part-theories' cannot be presented as formal knowledge that the agency understands, as it is not codified and adapts continuously, especially to movements of the individuals present in the agency (*ibid.*).

Hackley (2001) further finds that these 'part-theories' can often be collectively clustered within departments and designed to succeed in the harsh conditions of an agency. The type of harsh conditions include environments where ideas are presented and verbally-

rallied, and where the only ideas to survive are those for which are fought. This fighting ordinarily occurs through debates, where 'winning' ideas withstand challenges, and the prize is creative 'ownership' of a solution (*ibid.*). This, 'ownership' of creativity is a major source of internal conflict, state Kover *et al.* (1995).

1.2.2.3. Client vs. Agency

Triki *et al.* (2007) state that there has been a move from a traditional transactional buyer-seller interaction to one of a relationship in the advertising industry. This long-term relationship view creates a union between the parties which results in repurchase. Ultimately, the client-agency relationship aims to achieve an interdependent process exchange where parties design their own processes in line with their counterpart in mind to best maximise the throughput process for both entities. In this relationship, state Laing and Lain (2005), trust is a critical element.

However, a study shows that advertisers feel that only 73% of the produced work, from agencies, was regarded of a high quality, and in 2005 40% of both parties experienced relationship strain and felt the level of teamwork to be 66% and 36%, from client and agency, respectively (Elliot, 2006). These statistics show that there is room for quality improvements. Furthermore, there is a relatively high frequency of negative conflict, and the respective parties' understanding of the process differs radically in terms of required collaborative efforts. These efforts are speculated to relate to client dissatisfaction. An article in the *Financial Times* (*Marketing and Advertising Survey*, 1994) reported that agencies' ability-level and understanding of general business as well as communication problems including creative arrogance, negatively affected relationships. The article continues, finding that the situation would only worsen and further expose client dissatisfaction factors, in time.

1.2.3. THE VALUE MANAGEMENT RATIONALE

With the presence of such dissatisfaction of conducting business in advertising, alternate methods need to be looked to for assistance. Elliot (2006) cites an advertisers' conference, where it was found that a more inviting and trusting environment is likely to result in a better advertising experience as well as more suitable advertising solutions.

Mitchell *et al.* (1994) stated that it is possible to enhance the advertising experience via a re-engineering of the advertising process, in practice, using available advertising theory. Mitchell *et al.* (1994) continued to say that practitioners do not ascribe to advertising theory. Whereas Lace (1998) rationalises that by involving the client more ethnographically

from the beginning (presentation of brief to agency) it will encourage better understanding (by the agency) of the client's business. Baskin and Pickton (2003) believe that a better advertising experience can be achieved through a more robust and structured systematic management form. From this, both client and agency would benefit, as requirements and expectations would be predetermined, which would engage understanding of the campaign process as well as stakeholder trust. Finally, Triki *et al.* (2007) state that quality outputs can only be obtained through qualified inputs, i.e. the most effective inputs enhance value.

VM can offer a solution to many of the above cited problems through a structured management method that involves all stakeholders from the project outset, while focusing on customer value throughout the process. Dumond (2000), states that the application of VM not only helps projects but is also good business practice as it assists with business sustainability through customer satisfaction (and builds loyalty), and good service attracts clients.

VM was founded during the 1940s when, due to fewer available resources for non-war efforts, General Electric designed a concept where lowering costing inputs, through creative thinking, could result in a product with the same functionality (Male *et al.*, 2007). Although, fewer costs were incurred it did not compromise on quality (*ibid.*).

Today, VM deals with both increased benefit and decreased cost, and is defined as a formalised open structure that focuses on function to remove causes of unnecessary cost, thereby delivering the best possible solution, as well as potentially exposing unforeseen solutions (Koga, 2000). Leeuw (2001) explains that cost is the price paid for something, whereas *worth* is the least cost necessary to perform the required function; the difference is the *value*. VM endeavours to broaden this margin as far as possible while retaining full functionality.

Peters and Waterman (1982) state that service providers should be obsessed with delivering good service and quality to their client and by differentiating themselves from the rest through the best solution delivery of what the client needs. Although project managers endeavour to serve their client in the best possible way, often they miss opportunities, which can be largely attributed to a lack of procedural structure (Koga, 2000). This is where VM has a significant advantage, due to its rigorous yet flexible structure, which

allows value practitioners the ability to deliver the most cost effective and best solution possible (*ibid.*).

Koga and Constantineau (2000), as well as Koga (2000), find that VM is an ideal forum for project stakeholders to collaborate quickly through a workshopping process and to develop the project inputs to ensure the best value output for the clients. The earlier in the project it is implemented the greater the effect. VM can assist in: (1) expediting an incomplete design through collective workshopping; (2) planning of design, through construction, to project handover; and, (3) shortening project schedule, and/or discovering improvements in “*function, quality, performance, safety, cost, comfort, maintenance, [and] communication*” (Koga, 2000:142). These benefits, continues the author, can rapidly offset the financial cost of delay by not starting the project immediately.

However, to exploit the full utility of VM, it should be an integral element during the project design phase and not only embraced later (Whitney, 1988). The generic VM model, which can be applied to any project, is robust but flexible and involves 5 stages: (1) The Information phase is where project information is researched and collated; (2) The Analysis phase is where the product functions are deconstructed to be understood; (3) The Creativity phase is where alternate solution options are generated to fulfil the required functions; (4) The Judgement phase is where the options worth pursuing are identified, evaluated and selected; (5) The Development phase is where the ‘best’ solution(s) are developed into proposals for presentation during report-back, where the best are implemented (Baguley, 2005).

Thus, through the application of VM, as a tool to positively affect the briefing stage in advertising projects, and thereby collaboratively engaging the departure point for proposed creative solutions; it is possible to enhance the process, as well as potentially mitigate some problems that affect the advertising industry.

1.3. THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The problem to be examined in this study may be stated as:

Advertising agencies experience technological-developmental problems, internal agency problems and client-agency relationship problems, the results of which negatively impact projects by reducing value.

1.4. KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The key research questions upon which this study is founded are:

1. What is the current briefing process of a project in the advertising agency?
2. How effective is the current process?
3. How can the current brief experience be enhanced?
4. Do the identified problems that exist in theory, exist in the South African industry?
5. Can VM be used during the brief stage for advertising projects?

1.5. PROPOSITION

The guiding proposition was looked to, and used to, direct and measure the outcome of the study. Therefore, this research report's expected result can be stated that:

The use of VM during the briefing stage of advertising projects will positively influence such projects, through early guided collaborative efforts ¹.

1.6. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are to:

1. Establish the nature and extent of the current briefing process in the advertising industry.
2. Determine the effectiveness of the current briefing process.
3. Establish what measures can enhance the current briefing process.
4. Determine the presence of the identified problems in the South African advertising industry.
5. Explore the potential effects VM would have on the briefing process in advertising projects.

¹ The expression of the 'brief stage' is defined, for this report, in Section 2.2.4.3.

1.7. RESEARCH METHOD

In order to conduct empirical research, for this research report, the steps that were taken, include:

1. A literature review of both VM and advertising agencies was conducted to learn about the respective industries;
2. Case studies relating to both disciplines were conducted. These were designed to gather data in line with this study's area of interest (as stated by the research questions in Section 1.4);
 - 2.1. The current pre-production, and later briefing stage, framework of each agency was identified. This was done through semi-structured interviews with each agency.
 - 2.2. The VM framework with required activities was established (based on a generic VM model as identified in Chapter 2).
 - 2.3. A gap-analysis was then conducted, identifying activities that the current agency briefing stage process excludes relative to the VM framework.
 - 2.4. Based on the information gathered (during the steps above), interactive focus groups were then conducted. During these focus groups the concept of VM was introduced.
 - 2.5. Questionnaires were then answered by the study participants to assess their experiences during the VM introduction workshop.

1.8. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

Four limitations have been identified. They include:

1. Due to the limited amount of time and resources available to the researcher from the agencies, it was difficult to acquire all available data concerning the vast extent of the situation.
2. Due to the nature of the study, questioning the current format of the way in which business is conducted at their agencies, the study participants have possibly not

answered and/or engaged the study in the most honest manner, due to potential organisational politics.

3. This study looks at VM as a potential solution to enhance the briefing stage of advertising projects. However, VM is only one potential strategy, among many, to achieve the same goals.
4. The researcher's lack of activity and experience in the advertising arena made the access and acquisition of information difficult.

1.9. REPORT STRUCTURE

The structure with regards to the remainder of this research report consists of:

Chapter 2: This chapter outlines value and its importance, then an introduction into both VM and the advertising agency environment is chronicled. Then the agency problems are expressed, which is followed by a VM implementation rationale and VM's process.

Chapter 3: The third chapter presents a restatement of the study objectives, which is followed by the research design details and justification. The case study method details are then expressed *viz.* the data collection methods, procedures and analysis. Lastly the method quality and the limitations are stated.

Chapter 4: The following section showcases the findings from the study conducted. All information from the various sources, of both case studies, are gathered and collated. The data is then presented in a format in line with this study's research objectives.

Chapter 5: The penultimate chapter presents a discussion which summarises the findings (of Chapter 4) and analytically compares it to the literature of Chapter 2. The chapter concludes with a tabulated summary of the findings.

Chapter 6: The final chapter ends this research report with the study conclusions and recommendations which are put forward based on relevant information found in previous chapters and in line with the research objectives.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION TO THE LITERATURE

This chapter critically reviews the literature regarding the advertising industry as well as Value Management (VM) to aid understanding in both disciplines and to gain insight into the problem. It begins by contextualising VM as a Project Management (PM) tool, then explores the advertising construct (from the perspective of the agency) and looks at some problems that are found within the practice. Thereafter, the chapter presents VM as a potential method with which to manage the briefing stage of advertising projects.

Given the abundance of information available regarding both topics, it was considered prudent to summarise and distil this plethora of material into the above topics – with the view that this would result in a concise, content-rich case in favour of the use of VM in advertising.

2.2. AN ENVIRONMENTAL BACKGROUND

This section introduces, from a high-level, the advertising industry and VM from a general perspective. It begins by validating that the agency environment operates on a project basis, after which it expresses the importance of value. Then the reader is acquainted with the origin of VM and finally, the agency construct explained.

2.2.1. ADVERTISING AGENCIES WORK IS PROJECT BASED

All work done by advertising agencies for their clients is regarded and treated as a project (Triki *et al.*, 2007). The definition of a project is classified by the Project Management Institute's Body of Knowledge (PMBOK) (2004:6) as "*a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result,*" and Morris and Hough (1987) define it as an undertaking to achieve a specified objective (usually based on technical performance, budget and schedule). Thus, it is possible to manage an advertising project using the methodology, tools and techniques available to project managers (PMBOK, 2004; Ensor *et al.*, 2006). Through the management of a pre-defined scope, within the allotted time and budget and to the required quality, projects can be effectively handled to produce satisfactory outcomes (Koga, 2000; PMBOK, 2004).

The investment of a project is undertaken to add value to the core business of the client. By definition, a project has a start, a completion date, available resources, a method for

smooth integration into core business and, often, performance indicators to audit the level of the project's success. The project's values and objectives need to align with the client's organisation's values and objectives in order to assist this smooth integration. As the client is core business focused (i.e. long-term organisation success), which is contrary to the project (a finite-termed employment of resources), it is the project manager's task to deliver the project as per specification. Ultimately, the client is only interested in the project from a social and/or commercial perspective, i.e. how it adds value to the core business (Kelly, *et al.*, 2003).

However, this does not guarantee client satisfaction and often does not achieve it (Koga, 2000). The author continues explaining that a study proved project managers understood the clients' expectation through function, aesthetics, quality, time, and cost. It was evident that they felt confident in their responsibility to deliver the latter three, but did not feel contractually responsible for 'function' or 'aesthetics'. It was also found that 'quality' and 'function' are often the measures of the clients' project satisfaction. So, even if the product (final output of the project) is delivered to the clients' specifications, it is possible that it will not match clients' expectation, which will result in project dissatisfaction. To mitigate this (dissatisfaction-risk), it is strongly encouraged that project managers understand the inherent underlying value that clients place on projects. Thus, an understanding of the notion of 'value' is necessary.

2.2.2. UNDERSTANDING VALUE

Value is the basis of client satisfaction (Koga, 2000), the concept was found in the 1940s, during the infancy of the value-approach. It was realised that a product could be enhanced by substituting materials of a product with cheaper or better alternatives. This abstraction resulted in the inextricable relationship between function and cost, which became the definition of value. Later, this concept was positioned with reference to buyer or seller (Hamilton, 2002), where:

$$\text{SELLER} = \frac{\text{function}}{\text{cost}} \quad \text{and} \quad \text{BUYER} = \frac{\text{benefit}}{\text{price}}$$

Thus, it can be stated that value can be increased through decreasing either the cost or price, or, increasing the function or benefit, for seller and buyer, respectively. This value-relationship can be applied to project components or processes: to focus and drive project goals by assisting the development of strategies and aligning processes to add the highest value possible.

Koga (2000) makes slightly departed statements, where he finds value is the relationship between worth which is the market demand for the quality of performance of the necessary functions from the customers' perspective, and cost which is the financial life-cycle cost of the project, as paid by the client. Thus;

$$\text{value} = \text{worth} - \text{cost}$$

The gap between worth and cost is value, as is seen from the perspective of the client (i.e. value is the difference between what is paid, relative to what they receive). The higher the worth to cost, the greater the value, and vice versa.

From the buyer's perspective, worth relates to the perceived benefits attributed to the product, and when it equals or exceeds price they will purchase the product (Dumond, 2000). From the sellers' perspective, creating more work (i.e. increasing cost) does not automatically enhance value (Koga, 2000). Only when the cost increase shifts (enhances) worth beyond this cost increase, does value increase. Adding to the buyer's viewpoint, Kothari and Lackner (2006:243) find that "*customers do not buy products and services... [t]hey buy value,*" and, organisations that understand how clients attach value to these elements can take advantage of this through driving value and the attainment of long-term profitability, which makes good business sense.

Value, as found by Liu and Leung (2001), also has an internal project definition. This is established through project members' interpretation of the project as having either a high or low value, where commitment is attached more strongly to high value. Thus, for strong internal stakeholder dedication, projects must harbour a high-value culture early, and these must be defined clearly. This, continues the author, helps focus resources accordingly in expediting their (the resources) efficiency through the pro-active avoidance of non-value-adding elements. Goals (or activities) need to be interconnected and actively set with value in mind. This tandem relationship needs to be maintained, continuously, over the project duration (*ibid.*). This relationship supports the concept of value-adding activities enhancing project value.

Ultimately, states Dumond (2000), the effectiveness of managing value relies upon the ability of managers to create a strategy that develops an organisational system consisting of: training, jobs, relationships, measurement and information systems. This needs to be interwoven by an effective use of process management throughout the supply-chain. This

enhances customer satisfaction through a supportive organisation culture which focuses on continuous improvement.

2.2.3. VM – THE HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY

It was out of the need to manage 'value', that during the 1940's VM emerged (Kelly, *et al.* 2004). Value Engineering (as it was originally called) was traditionally a cost-reducing construct that was founded in the United States of America's manufacturing industry as a need to resolve the continuation of production under the lack of materials available, which was a result of the war effort (*ibid.*). Thus, the need for substitution of unavailable materials in non-military products led to creative solutions (*ibid.*). Over the years this concept was exported internationally, and broadened its scope to include both cost and a best all-round value of a problem, project, product/service or organisation (see Sections 2.2.1-2). Value Engineering was also re-branded VM, in the United Kingdom (Ellis *et al.*, 2005), and expanded utility beyond that of only manufacture into *"all type of projects irrespective of which sector they come from"* (Kelly, *et al.*, 2004:1).

VM, according to Burke (2003:53), evolved as a *"structured, systematic and analytical process that seeks to achieve value for money by providing all necessary functions at the lowest total cost, [while being] consistent with required levels of quality and performance"*. Where Hamilton (2002:131) defines a necessary function as *"that which makes a product perform in accordance with requirements and will sell"*, while Koga (2000:140) defines the VM methodology as *"an open and formal structure focused on function to remove causes of unnecessary cost [where] it seeks balance [and] it sometimes exposes unforeseen solutions[.]"* and, *"it provides the owner an opportunity to fairly evaluate the options considering factors such as performance, quality, aesthetics and life cycle cost"*.

The underlying theory is that in order to achieve these functions (as identified by Burke (2003) above) many options exist (some necessary and others less so), and the selected functions are regarded as the most acceptable – with regards to the project (Burke, 2003). Further, the functional acceptability is measured reviewing the entire project life-cycle.

While cost reduction and shared project vision is not a new concept, it is in the robust and structured set of tools, techniques and methods where VM has a competitive advantage (Hamilton, 2002). Hamilton (2002) continues that through the use of the available VM techniques it is possible to rigourously examine and develop a project with reference to optimising value, i.e. cost and benefit.

Although often not the case, the VM process is, in theory, natural and should occur during every project design phase (Morup, 1992). By advocating VM's structured format for projects as a means of eliciting true value-drivers, as required by clients, Koga (2000) reinforces the idea that the VM process is a crucial component of the project design phase. Dumond (2000) says that through this understanding, the project team will be empowered to increase client value, which in turn builds client loyalty (i.e. client retention) and attracts new patronage through good service. Koga (2000) concludes that managers of projects, at large, can use the methodology of VM to reduce risk of value loss, and he points out that the earlier it is integrated, the more value it can add.

2.2.4. THE ADVERTISING CONTEXT – THE WHY, WHO, AND HOW

The following section explains the advertising industry. This is done by first expressing the function of the industry, after which the direct stakeholders are discussed, and finally the workflow explained.

2.2.4.1. The Why – Role

The earliest recorded proof of advertising occurred approximately five thousand years ago, where limited distribution forced proprietors to walk through neighbourhoods presenting their available wares. Later, advertising became more sophisticated through the development of paper, the printing-press and transport, which allowed mass (wide-spread) communication. Later, through further advances in technology, most notably industrial, electrical, telecommunications, information technologies and mass media booms of the 20th century, advertising evolved into the massive industry it is today (Arens and Schaefer, 2007).

Today, there is much competition among advertising agencies, both small and large. This is possibly due to the advent of technology which allows smaller agencies to compete cheaply and more fairly against larger ones, which was impossible in the past (Arens and Schaefer, 2007).

Organisations need to communicate between themselves and their customers (or potential customers), and to do so, marketing is used as a necessary tool to present the organisation, product and/or service (from here on "product"). The *American Marketing Association* (Arens and Schaefer, 2007:6) defines marketing as: "... an organizational function and a set of processes for creating communication, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders". Belch and Belch (1990) extend this definition to include that it strives

to make a success of the organisations' objectives through the effective execution of the 'four P's' in the marketing mix: product, price, placement, and promotion.

Promotion (also known as advertising) is defined as: *"...the structured and composed non-personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products (goods, service, and ideas) by identified sponsors through various media"* (Arens and Schaefer, 2007:4). Advertising is a highly specialised trade focusing solely on the promotion of company products (Belch and Belch, 1990), it is most often conducted independently of the organisation by third-party service-providers (an advertising agency) to assist the advertiser (the client) (Arens and Schaefer, 2007). Belch and Belch (1990) validate agencies' utility through their ability to deliver solutions in the best manner through their objectivity, and over the long-term horizon, the client-agency relationship, tend to offer relationship-based amenities. This is a preferred, more mature manner of conducting business rather than a mere transactional-based proceeding, which lends itself to varying degrees of a client-agency partnership (Michell, 1983, cited in Hill and Johnson, 2004).

Over time, the investment of advertising will drive an increase of sales (Belch and Belch, 1990; Arens and Schaefer, 2007), proving agencies create value for clients. This is realised through a high-involvement, high cost, people-based, business-to-business or creative service, advertising industry (Hill and Johnson, 2004). Thus, advertising is a necessary part of commercial society.

2.2.4.2. The Who – Stakeholders

In each project in which the agency is involved, a project team (or account team) is created from selected agency employees. The function of the project team is to work together with the client (or the client's marketing team) during the conception (or pre-production) phase. The following describes a typical project's stakeholder structure (Arens and Schaefer, 2007):

1. **The client / advertiser:** this is the commissioning, and normally the financing, entity, in business. The client's needs differ depending on organisation/project size and complexity. Their marketing strategy needs to be a singularity which is heard across the marketing mix, and filtered down from committed top management throughout the organisation.

There has been a move toward client co-producers during the advertising process (Broderick, 1999), and, state Mills and Marguiles (1980), they, too, should take responsibility for advertising outputs, as it will help achieve enhanced value. However, Hill and Johnson (2004) identified two general client-agency relationship patterns, along the client-agency involvement continuum. Pattern-1 is categorised as a 'true partnership' (the one end of the continuum); the agency is involved in the strategy creation with their client, facilitating high levels of communication. The more common Pattern-2 (the other end of the continuum) is a more 'master-servant' relationship (with client as master) where the clients design the strategy and the agency is only required to provide the service as per brief, and nothing more, with little communication.

2. **The agency:** the creative objectives are achieved using the agency structure, which is geared to develop and prepare advertising plans, conduct research, produce the advertisements, and rent advertising space/time through the media to present the advertisement (Gamble, 1970). Whether above- or below-the-line advertising (where the former is mass-communication, and the latter specific-individual-communication), the agency is able to save their clients' time through their early involvement with all promotional needs (Jones, 1999).

Agencies present their clients' products to the target audience, with the assistance of the following participants:

- 2.1. **Account Management** is responsible for designing and executing advertising plans. Account Management is required to configure the agency to achieve the goal; facilitate communication between client and agency; be current with project developments and liaise these with necessary parties. Internally, Account Management represents the client, and externally, the agency.
- 2.2. **Strategy / Account Research:** Often research needs to be gathered for projects to understand the product and target audience/consumer in order to produce effective work. Internally, Strategy defends the consumers' initiative during the advertising process.
- 2.3. **Media Management:** address the best method to present the advertisement created by the agency, to the target audience.

2.4. Creatives': functional role comprises of two sub-divisions copywriters (verbal communicators), and art directors (visual communicators); who work together to deliver creative solutions. Their work begins by understanding the agency's brief which covers Strategy research as well.

2.5. Traffic Management: co-ordinates activities and movements of the various project members.

2.6. Production: ensures that after client approval of the proposed creative solution, the project then enters production. This is where the advertisement is produced physically from a creative concept.

2.7. Administration: involves operational tasks that are necessary to keep an agency functioning.

2.8. Consumer / Target Audience: views and reacts to the final advertised product.

Each agency will design its structure in the most effective manner. The structure depicted in below (Fig. 2.1) represents a typical agency using the above elements.

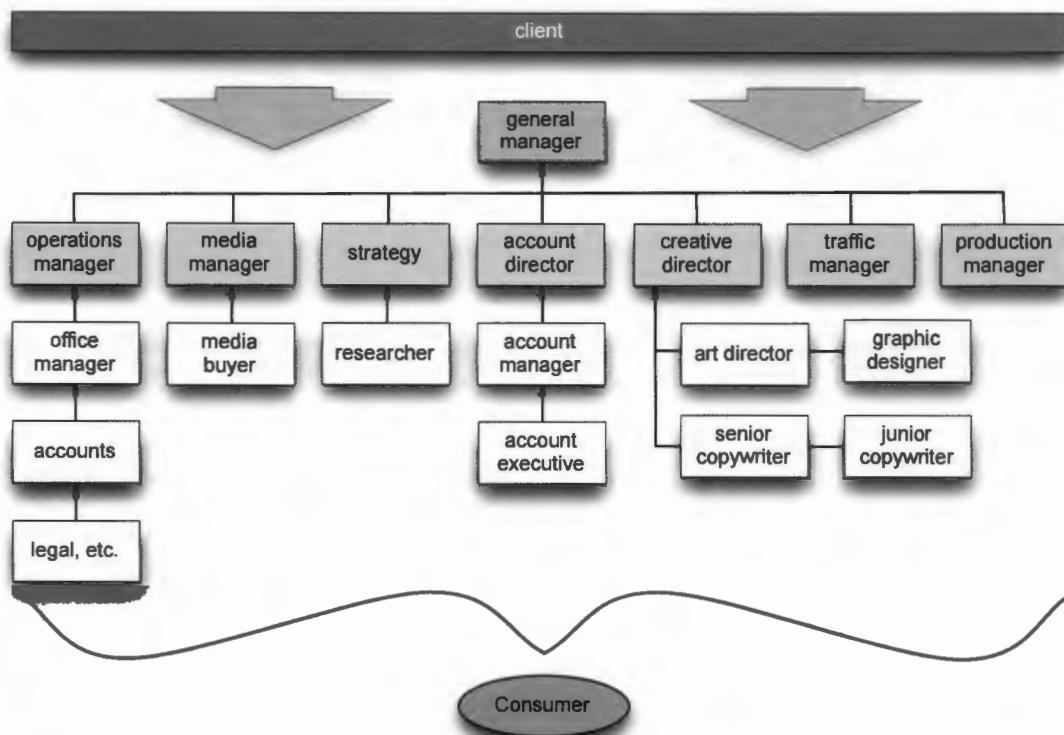


Fig. 2.1: A typical advertising agency organogram (Source: adapted from Arens and Schaefer, 2007)

2.2.4.3. The How – Pre-production Process (Workflow)

In the 1980s a 5-stage creative process was developed (Amabile, 1988), and, built on much of this theory, a generic 5-stage advertising model was constructed (Sinclair, 1997:42-44). Then, the Plan, Imagine, Selection, Creative, Evaluation, and Start (PISCES) Process was developed. This was specifically geared to tackling creativity through an action plan (Vardis and Vasa-Sideris, 2000).

Over recent years a study was conducted by Hill and Johnson (2004) to understand the process used by practitioners during the pre-production phase. The consolidation of information follows below, entitled the Advertising Problem Delineation, Communication and Response (APDCR) process, which begins pre-agency involvement (shown in Fig. 2.2):

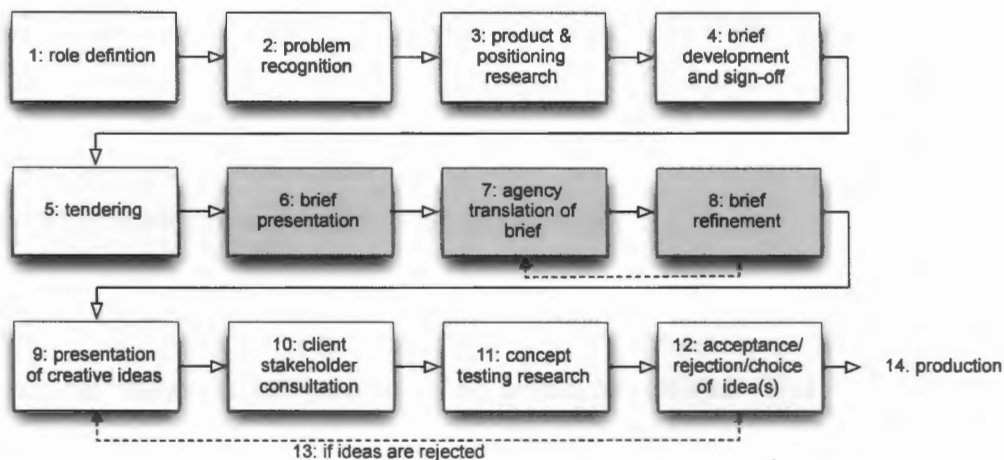


Fig. 2.2: The advertising problem delineation, communication and response (APDCR) process (Source: adapted from Michell, 1984)

1. **Role definition:** An agency is selected and an inter-organisational relationship is formalised.
2. **Problem recognition:** Clients identify a problem that needs resolving (i.e. an advertising project), and high level marketing research is conducted.
3. **Product and positioning research:** Copious detailed data is gathered.
4. **Brief development and internal sign-off:** A client brief is developed from the data and internally approved. The agency may be involved if a Pattern-1 relationship (see Section 2.2.4.2) exists.

5. **Tendering:** This is done if no standing relationships, or if problems exist, with the agency.
6. **Brief presentation:** This is either in written or spoken form; usually involving Account Management and the client.
7. **Agency translation of the brief:** The client brief is rewritten to an agency format, usually summarising relevant information for creative and media elements.
8. **Iterative brief refinement / ideation:** This is the fine-tuning of the brief, and ideas are shared with the client, testing reactions (frequency dependant on relationship type). If the client is unsatisfied return to 'stage 7'.
9. **Presentation of creative idea(s):** The agency presents creative ideas to client; with a similar audience as 'stage 6' (duration normally two to three weeks between stages 6 and 9).
10. **Client stakeholder consultation:** Alternative ideas are interrogated, and a short-list of best options, as defined by the brief, are selected.
11. **Concept testing research:** This is only done for new or novel markets.
12. **Acceptance/rejection or choosing of creative idea(s):** The final creative ideas tested with client.
13. (If ideas rejected) **Iterative rework is conducted and/or strategies influenced:** This is done by cycling back to 'stage 9'.
14. (If ideas accepted) **Production commences:** The project progresses to create the approved idea.

This research report is focused on the stages 6 – 8 (as indicated by the darker coloration). This is termed the briefing stage.

2.3. CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE OPPORTUNITY

The advertising industry is one that experiences a high incidence of negative conflict as well as dissatisfaction, some of which has been presented in this section. The problems facing the advertising environment, that have been identified, can be found both within the

agency and between client and agency (the dynamics of which will follow). These problems invariably manifest in all facets of the advertising construct where although all parties ultimately endeavour toward a mutual goal, it is often done adversarially. This practice is not good for business.

Advertising and marketing literature most often explains the problems incumbent in advertising as a combination of execution techniques, the content of which includes: brief-development processes; the degree of creative involvement during the briefing stage; Creatives' brief use; and dynamics of the project team and that of the client-agency relationship (Hill and Johnson, 2004). Furthermore, the briefing stage, as seen in the APDCR process (stages 6 – 8), includes only necessary participants, and ordinarily begins with a consolidation of early information which is then drafted into a brief (*ibid.*). The process, states Lange (2001), differs depending on: the project; the individuals writing the brief (most often only Account Management); and the content. This means that there is no single process in writing a brief. Even if there were a single designed method/process on writing a brief, practitioners would not be inclined to use it, as they (practitioners) do not regard advertising theory highly, citing it as impractical (Hackley, 2001). Which, expresses Hackley (2001), is stifling for the advertising industry.

Another noted interesting find was the plethora of internet weblogs documenting the current threat to advertising agencies, and industry dissatisfactions from clients as well as from within agencies. These weblogs, thus, allow individuals' vexations to be made known using the internet as a means to distribute the message ².

The literature, that follows, expresses some advertising problems through three dimensions: (1) agencies not adapting to accommodate technology; (2) internal agency problems; and (3) problems between client and agency. The following sections discusses these dimensions.

2.3.1. TECHNOLOGY CHANGED WORLD

Most literature about clients and their agencies focuses on the agency selection phase, i.e. success or failure of the client's ability to select the right agency. However, it has recently been established that the time frame within which success or failure is decided (success or failure's time horizon) extends beyond the selection phase, and proven connections

² http://www.thinkpersonality.com/archives/2007/04/agency_model_is.html; <http://adformula.blogspot.com/2007/07/advertising-art-of-client-agency.html>; <http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?type=CASE%20STUDIES&itemId=1075395629>; http://www.brandchannel.com/view_comments.asp?dc_id=7; <http://ihaveanidea.org/articles/>

between problems in the client-agency relationship stem from a lack of: creativity, experience, diligence, trust, communication, and agency co-operation (Triki *et al.*, 2007).

Treffiletti (2007) summarises that the current status of agency pressures, emerge naturally, out of advancing technology. Historically, advertising was regarded as the 'magic from creative genii', where they worked long hours saving brands through ideation, the results of which were painstakingly prepared and 'sold' to clients. Today, the mystique has faded as technology has increasingly simplified the lives of these creators. The price of this technology, however, is that the public now has full access to 'creative trade-secrets'. Thus, anyone who can operate a computer and has the intent can create and distribute advertising, and can do so at a very low cost (Lace, 1998; Treffiletti, 2007).

Due to lower entry barriers, more competition exists today, and clients know this (Treffiletti, 2007). Patronage, the author continues, is more tightly connected to cost now than it ever was, and, to retain clientele, agencies have been 'blackmailed' into full accountability for their products (i.e. creative solutions are required to achieve what is promised, by the agency). If this is not realised, clients threaten that accounts will be terminated and services sought through cheaper, smaller, 'hungrier' agencies. Although, a sound corporate mechanism, Gladman and Melsom (2005) cautions that this encourages 'safe' advertising, which, while it allows agencies to be sure of their results, also numbs creativity. This often leads to agency frustration and, paradoxically, disappointed clients.

Technology has also allowed transparency of costs, which has made the specialised agency supply-chain accessible to clients. In the past, an agency's 'bread and butter' income stream was acquired through execution (i.e. agency production mark-up), now this revenue has been significantly reduced or depleted; of course, this threatens agencies' very existence (Treffiletti, 2007). The author continues, stating that dropping profits result in agencies' cutting costs of non-income-drivers (ordinarily, this includes account and project managers). In order to diminish this effect, agencies need to refocus efforts, especially with regards to Strategy, as it is not regarded in delivering sufficient utility, and thus not taken seriously enough, across the industry.

Lace (1998) states that agencies simply have not moved with the times, and Holloway (1993) records that there are many individuals who believe that agencies are out of touch with the new reality, and that the relationship between client and agency is tantamount to open warfare. This resultant deviation of each party can largely be attributed to

irreconcilable differences brought upon through separate developments of each discipline. Over time these differences are expected to continue diverging.

2.3.2. PROBLEMS WITHIN THE AGENCY

West and Ford (2001) state that often agencies publicise their 'creative philosophies' as a marketing tool to express their creative expertise, however, pin-pointing the practices that stem from such philosophies is difficult. Often 'implicit theories' can be used in practice and never articulated through the business, and thus, remain unknown to the organisation (Kover, 1995). It is possible, therefore, to state that many 'part-theories' exist in the agency workspace, which are based on an individual's professional interpretation of the world that surrounds the individual; obviously, given the subjective nature of this notion, each cognition is different (Hackley, 2001). Thus, these 'part-theories' cannot be described as philosophically coherent or as a formal position on knowledge; they should only be described, however, as perspective and method, which cannot be enhanced or added to over time, because they lack a codification or a formal foundation.

These individualistic methods are often designed departmentally and, commonly, as tools geared towards an environment with a backdrop of conflict (Hackley, 2001). This is due to the nature of the industry where creativity is an intangible asset and the development of it is Darwinian: its survival depends on its ability to transcend through many stakeholders via large debates over idea validity. These debates are 'political contests' where stakeholders canvas for support of creativity 'ownership' where the most articulate are the strongest – and thus often 'winners'. The prize for success is the selection of one's 'creativity' as an advertising solution, or part thereof. Thus, find Kover *et al.* (1995), 'ownership' of creativity is a major source of internal conflict.

A study conducted by Hackley (2001) found that Strategy, too, creates conflict, through 'placing' consumers in the centre of projects (i.e. having their interests held as the ultimate project priority). During advertising strategy-development, researchers do not consult Creatives regarding the best possible creative angle, thus the research conducted is regarded as a *de facto* state within which Creatives are required to work. This encompasses little buy-in from Creatives. As a result, during the creativity phase (done after the strategy development), Creatives do not regard the research as holistic and correct. This stand-off creates an 'us and them' mentality between strategists (researchers) and the rest of the project team (mainly Creatives). The resulting situation makes collaborative work difficult, as the lack of consideration for other project members'

contribution encourages individual work. This work is, almost always, only related to the individuals' functional perspective rather than a synergetic whole. Further, continues Hackley (2001), the account team (mainly Account Management and Creatives) can feel 'resentful' towards researchers due to a feeling of their authority being undermined with respect to product-customer understanding ³.

This conflict stems, largely, from differences in discipline and a (real or perceived) lack of understanding/consideration from and to others (Hackley, 2001). Gladman and Melsom (2005) state that research is necessary to support creativity, but is not pivotal in validating ideas.

Another problem is the belief that creative people tend to seek independence, question authority, and are often more motivated by solving problems than by receiving rewards (Hill and Johnson, 2004). Thus, it is considered that Creatives need to be moulded (i.e. controlled) to add value for clients. To encourage Creatives to think along a specific path, the brief is only given to them once Account Management and Strategy design the foundation and establish the research. Where the proverbial 'ball is in motion' with regards to the project and Creatives as well as Media find themselves in a situation where they are required to work within the predefined boundaries. The by-product of this is that Creatives and Media have little input. Research conducted by Hackley (2001) shows that Creatives do not appreciate being left out of the strategy.

Hackley (2001), also, feels that understanding stakeholders' backgrounds can explain their perspectives. There is a dichotomy in terms of thinking within the agency. Different departments think according to their training, this explicates further internal problems where: (1) clients and Account Management personnel stem from business training and they understand problems quantitatively, where a 'copy and paste' solution of 'tried and tested' work will reduce creative risk. The second type of thinking comes from Strategy and Creatives, as they are interested in the insight and knowledge gained from engaging and stimulating the consumer, which can be used as a springboard to develop creativity. Thus, a stalemate between creativity (which increases risk) and effectiveness (the 'tried and tested' approach) is framed.

³ Although there is much literature on Group Dynamics (e.g. Kelly *et al.*, 2004), and the possibility of exploring it exists, this research report has not been directed toward it as a topic for discussion and should be explored in another study.

Hackley (2001), then, adds that even though creativity is the cornerstone of advertising, it has no value without a strategy, which contradicts Gladman and Melsom's (2005) view that all too often research is followed too obsessively rather than using the findings as a guide. Thus, in order to co-exist, project team members need to respect and be educated about one-another's functional roles, where best solutions are developed through collaboration (Hackley, 2001).

Lace (1998) states that the future of agencies is proportional to their ability to understand and service their clients in ways that positively impact on the agency-client relationship (i.e. pleasing clients). Treffiletti (2007) plainly cautions that, for the future existence of agencies, it is a matter of 'adapt or die'.

2.3.3. PROBLEMS WITH THE CLIENT-AGENCY RELATIONSHIP

The long-term relationship style between agency and client (see Section 2.2.4.1) creates a union between the parties, resulting in repurchase. The agency provides a service as a professional organisation, designed to reduce clients' risk exposure through skill-hiring for problem solving, i.e. advertising (Triki *et al.*, 2007). In this 'professional' model, trust is critical (Laing and Lain, 2005), and it is the delivery of a quality product that dictates continued relationship success (Triki *et al.*, 2007).

Client and agency inculcate different manifestos (Gladman and Melsom, 2005) that exist within their organisation's culture. For example, if the agency is focused on the conception of ideas and ideation, they (primarily Creatives) follows a pattern of art, i.e. taking bold risky steps in the name of creativity to create an iconic piece of work and win accolades to grow business. Clients, on the other hand, have a more scientific stance, i.e. ascribing to risk-aversion. As advertising is expensive, it needs to be pragmatically invested; tools need to be employed to ensure idea efficacy pre-implementation.

It is against this backdrop that the client-agency relationship is based, where clients feel it unnecessary to invest energy into suppliers (i.e. the agency) as it is the agencies, that provide the service (Gladman and Melsom, 2005). However, this attitude only diminishes creative quality, as both relationship and work are tested, which can lead to a lack of agency dedication, resulting in client dissatisfaction and ultimately relationship termination (Doyle *et al.*, 1980).

Michell (2001) cites several studies, which, found that clients and agencies have a deficient relationship, with blame ascribed to trivial and distracting tasks, inexperience at

the briefing stage, and insufficient training with key creative decision-makers. Triki *et al.* (2007) add to the discussion, finding that the top three conflict causes are: client-agency relationship distance (both emotional and physical); ambivalence toward client-agency and/or the project; and the lack of creativity (incorrect subjectivity). While another catalyst could be the differing needs of both the client and agency in terms of the differences between a Pattern-1 or Pattern-2 relationship (described in Section 2.2.4.2). Moorman *et al.* (1992), encourage the increase of communication to develop a better understanding of counter-parties, which most likely will result in a greater trust, as relationships develop.

As cited above, trust is critical. Gladman and Melsom (2005) also found that if trust exists between client and agency, the agency works harder to maintain it, as it is a valued commodity and the basis of inter-organisational relationships. They continue that trust can only be achieved through a supportive and welcoming environment which encourages creativity and where clients embrace ideas. However, according to Triki *et al.* (2007), relationship breakdowns often result from problems in creativity, delivery times, quality and clarity of the brief, as well as the account planning (i.e. Strategy). Often these factors were not resolved effectively during project conception and/or were not corrected when they occurred, thereby contaminating the remainder of the project, and potentially the client-agency relationship. Gladman and Melsom (2005) add to this list, referring to: a strained and often intimidating work climate; the easy appointment of blame; slowness of delivery; and misinterpretation of both the brief and research, often to suit biased agendas.

Hill and Johnson (2004) noted that there was a lack of consultation between client and agency during the brief translation and refinement phases in the APDCR process (described in Section 2.2.4.3), typical of most relationships experiencing a Pattern-2 relationship (explained in 2.2.4.2). Pattern-2 decreases the quality of proposed solutions during the ideation, whereas Pattern-1's high level of consultation, however, results in more of a partnership, where both parties are geared towards a better unified position.

In a study conducted by Michell (2001), communication problems existed through creative critique, where it was found that Creatives are personally connected to their ideas and find clients' blind critiques callous. This finding also showed that clients might not be criticising agencies in the most productive manner, and that the 'review methods' utilised by clients need to be overhauled.

The annual *Salz Survey of Advertising-Agency Relations* conducted in the United States, measures the quality of client-agency relations, as explained by Elliot (2006). The survey found: advertisers feel that only 73% of clients feel their agency produced work of quality; and, in 2005, 40% of both parties experienced relationship strain. The study, further showed that teamwork was measured, from the client's and agency's perspective at 66% and 36%, respectively. These indications underscore the lack of cohesion between client and agency, and show there is room for quality improvements. Coupled with this is a relatively high frequency of negative conflict, where respective parties' understanding of the process differs, in terms of what they consider to be required collaborative efforts, which is speculated to be related to client dissatisfaction.

The dissatisfaction of the client-agency relationship has been evident for approximately the past twenty years (Elliot, 2006), where wasted resources and unclear briefs have often been cited as the cause of many problems (Baxter, 2007). Taylor (1994) found that, ultimately, clients want agencies to spend more working time with more resources on their campaigns, to generate dynamic, pro-active ideas that will challenge their (clients') thinking. This, should be done at a lower cost (to client). To achieve this, agencies will need to look to alternate methods if they wish to deliver further add value to clients.

Together with the problems listed above, the large volume of advertising agencies and their price-competitiveness makes for a situation where agency recycling (i.e. agency relationship termination) is more common today than historically. However, there is a significant price that is paid by both client and agency when there is a change of account, and this (as well as a belief in the long-term relationship) is why both parties go to extreme conditions in an endeavour to make their relationship work under all conditions (Triki *et al.*, 2007).

An article in the *Financial Times* (*Marketing and Advertising Survey*, 1994) states that clients were dissatisfied with their agency's level of ability, as well as the agency's understanding of their (the client's) general business. The article continued, citing the agencies' need for continuous project review and assessment, communication problems, and 'creative arrogance' as key factors that stifled the relationship with negativity.

Further, it is interesting to note that there is a general belief that agencies can create more effective advertising. This belief is due to the agencies' currency in advertising industry best practices, and results in most advertisers (i.e. clients) relying on an advertising

agency for expert, objective counsel and unique creative skills; to be the 'guardian of their brands'. Although this is the accepted norm, the *Salz Survey* found that less than a third of advertisers trust their agencies, and only 30% of agencies feel that they are being respected. This can only lead to unnecessary stress being exerted on these relationships (Elliot, 2006).

There is also a question of agencies' agendas, Treffiletti (2007) points out, agencies have large investments in themselves (i.e. with regards to agency owned facilities). Thus, it is not uncommon for agencies to find creative solutions in-house, rather than the best solution for the client. Therefore it can be inferred that agencies make decisions based on their best interest and, often, not their clients', contradictory to the professional duty as well as the clients strategy (*ibid.*).

As has been found, there are various problems, both internal and external to the agency environment that affect the advertising industry with undue negative conflict.

2.4. ADVERTISING ENHANCED THROUGH VM

Many of the problems that are described in Section 2.3 deliver opportunities by looking outside the advertising industry for potential solutions. This said, for the remainder of this chapter, the author has argued in favour of VM as a potential legitimate panacea to some key problem areas within the advertising industry. The following list of summarised, nine problem areas have been sourced from the information in the previous section (Section 2.3). These problem areas have been identified, by the author of this research report, as those that theory has presented, and that may be positively affected by the application of VM. These problem areas include:

1. The selection of creative solutions is based on organisational politics, individual status (i.e. the agency hierarchy), and aggressive campaigning of ideas. The selection should rather be based on the merits of the solutions themselves.
2. Creatives are only included on projects after brief and strategy completion, giving them little latitude to enhance the project at a conception level. Creatives would enjoy contributing with their input early to impact the project conceptually. They do not have the opportunity, and thus they often do not buy-in to project solutions.

3. Different departments within agencies are increasingly insular as a result of different disciplines/backgrounds. This creates an 'us and them' mentality within the agency, where separate departments have vastly different ideas regarding goals and measures of success. This has a negative effect on projects.
4. The agency is regarded as a supplier by clients rather than a partner or custodian of client brands. They require the agency to complete tasks assigned to them, and do not want to give the agency attention.
5. The client and agency, often, do not understand one another's intent and expectation. This occurs for both the project and wider relationship.
6. There is a lack of communication between client and agency during early project stages, and as a good product can only be produced from good inputs, project quality is thus affected.
7. Clients do not feel the agencies' contribution is value-for-money.
8. Client's lack of respect of the agency results in a diminished creative quality of solution, which affects the project and relationship.
9. As a result of an unresolved breakdown during a project, the client-agency relationship is affected, and ultimately trust between both parties is diminished.

The following sections support the proposed use of VM, during early project phases, as an intended solution to the nine stated problem areas, and as a departure point for this study.

2.4.1. RATIONALE

As stated in Section 2.2.2, understanding and driving value is key for project success, and project managers need to be well-versed in this. Moreover, as found in Section 2.3, there is a trend of dissatisfaction found by both client and agency emanating from within agencies, as well as between client and agency. Lace (1998) reasons that this is due to: (1) communication problems; (2) agency performance issues; (3) a lack of agency insight into client's business; and (4) the client's dissatisfaction with regards to value-for-money. Much of this, the author explains, could be mitigated through early, active, client involvement (a plan of action that carries the bonuses of enhancing project performance and developing a complementary client-agency relationship through collaborative work, all of which, over time, encourages trust).

Gladman and Melsom (2005) add to this, stating that problems should be collectively and pro-actively resolved early in projects and in relationships. This transparency should be initiated during the briefing stage and continued through the pre-production phase, and during the creativity stage, to foster and hone an honest, open, and sharing environment; in which feedback is collaborated to generate a best collective solution. This is the path to growing relationships, through sharing.

Whereas Lace's (1998) advocacy of client involvement encourages a better understanding (by the agency) of the client's business, Baskin and Pickton (2003) believe that a better advertising experience can be achieved through a structured, systematic management form, benefiting both client and agency through predetermined requirements and expectations. This would engage understanding of the project scope and process/es as well as stakeholder trust, which can significantly reduce tension and conflict and facilitate reworks (Hall and Johnson, 2004). To this, Triki *et al.* (2007) state that quality outputs can only be obtained through qualified inputs, i.e. the most effective inputs enhance value, and these need to be well understood and substantiated. Whatever management structure is used, Vardis and Vasa-Sideris (2000) encourage its enforcement from senior management, legitimising it, and making it easy to attach resources to its use.

Lace (1998) adds a voice to the structured management form by endorsing the possibility of the advertising process being re-engineered. However, although literature on enhancing creativity and managing Creatives is abundant, there is very little, that was found, that tackles the processes regarding advertising, during the briefing stage (i.e. from 'stage 6' to 'stage 8' in the APDCR process – Section 2.2.4.3).

In his presentation entitled, *Do schools kill creativity?*, at a *Technology, Education, Design (TED)* presentation, Robinson (2006) defines 'creativity' as a process of creating new ideas that have value, and states that it regularly comes about through cross-disciplinary communication. This, as well as value enhancement, is what the use of VM endeavours to achieve (as reasoned in Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3). Thus, it can be argued that if applied during the early phase of projects, VM can be an ideal tool to strengthen the advertising industry.

2.4.2. POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

There is an array of commentary on the project structure in terms of life-cycle stages, most of which describe a three stage cycle, as found by Hunter and Kelly (2003). These are: (1)

the pre-project stage (planning project scope, acquiring resources and identifying stakeholders); (2) the execution stage (the plan is brought into action to fulfil the project); and (3) the post-project stage (project completion and absorption into core client-business).

The *Society for American Value Engineers* (SAVE, 2007) explains that a VM exercise iteration, called a Job Plan, can be applied any time, any number of times, during the life-cycle, can be done both pro- and retro-actively and can last from days to weeks depending on the project complexity (Baguley, 2005). The reason for the application of a Job Plan can arise out of a variety of reasons, including: tackling problems, gathering stakeholder information, and ensuring project team commitment (Hunter and Kelly, 2003). Pre-requisites for a successful Job Plan, as stated by Leeuw (2001), include: (1) participant willingness to be involved actively and convinced of the potential benefits; (2) senior management's support of process and participation; (3) each project aspect to be represented proportionately and correctly; and (4) the utilisation of an experienced and capable facilitator.

In spite of its potential application throughout a project, the most significant benefit of a Job Plan is experienced when implemented during the early project stages. During the fundamental laying of project foundation (i.e. planning) it has been proven that the application of VM tends to actively and positively impact on projects. This is most often due to the availability of time and resources, prior to their inefficient squandering. Thus, in this environment it makes a 'change-for-the-better' more likely, than later on in the project (Whitney, 1988; SAVE, 2007).

Hunter and Kelly (2003) continued to explore and refine the three-stage project model (shown below Fig. 2.3), based on work done by Male *et al.* (1998), cited in Kelly *et al.* (2004), which identified common points in a project during which value can potentially be unlocked (shown by the symbols on the right-hand side of the following figure). As stated above, a project can be divided into three stages: pre-project stage – discussion and paper-based, concludes on budgetary approval; project stage – identified design and implementers are involved; post-project – project termination and/or absorption into client core business.

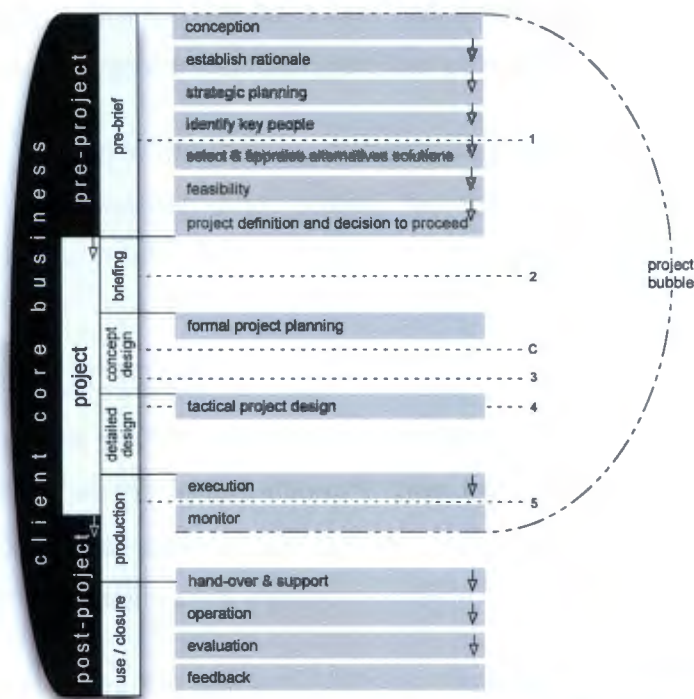


Fig. 2.3: The 3-stage project model (Source: adapted from Hunter and Kelly 2003)

An interesting find was that both briefing and project design occur during the project phase, and not during the pre-project phase, which is where they are often regarded to occur. The rationale for this is that as briefs are only performed after the decision to execute a project, they, therefore, form apart of the actual project phase and not pre-project. Another stimulating discovery was that often, during the project, parallel activities (which, while not project-related, have a profound impact on the project) need to occur to continue with the project (e.g. during the concept design phase, the client needs to reduce the project scope due to a cash-flow problem). These peripheral activities create the project bubble (Hunter and Kelly, 2003) and often add further dynamics or complications to the project.

The pre-project occurs at the client's organisation until the requirement for a fundamental change is expressed, and then the project is initiated. Thus, by focusing on the planning phase (primarily, the brief and concept design stages) and achieving a collaborated vision (i.e. between client, agency, and so on), it is possible to focus change, thereby eliciting more value (Hunter and Kelly, 2003).

Although a counter argument of VM's utility often focuses on the lack of available time to endure a study, a Job Plan can replace ordinary business meetings. Further Koga (2000, 142) expresses that they can *"be more effective than some of the normal meetings held to*

orient the team, develop program, discuss scope, originate ideas and concepts, review drawings, review budget, discuss contractibility, and solve problems”.

On the strength of this section's information, primarily regarding the benefit of early VM application the rest of this chapter, and indeed the research report, focuses on the employment of VM during the briefing stage of advertising projects.

2.5. THE VM PROCESS

As rationalised in the above section, a good starting point, for advertising agencies, to involve VM in a project is at the introduction of their involvement, which is during the briefing stage. The validation, as seen in Section 2.4.1, alludes to a project's output quality being strongly related to the quality of its inputs.

The following section explicates the utility of VM's application during the briefing stage of projects. After which, the Job Plan process will be explained as a proposed regimented way of dealing with briefs to begin projects in advertising agencies.

2.5.1. THE BRIEF

The statement that project outputs are only as good as the possible inputs targets the quality of brief delivered to the agency by the client. Hill and Johnson (2004) add to this concept, stating it is in the efficacy of information inputs, as well as finding and assigning the best suited individuals early (e.g. the Creatives within the agency) as time is an expensive resource.

The brief is defined as a process through which the client informs parties (normally individuals who are involved in the project) of a need. This is formally documented as 'setting-out the scope' (Telford, 1997, cited in Kelly *et al.*, 2003). Gladman and Melsom (2005) take this a step further, expressing that, in the advertising industry, briefs should provide direction and not directives; where objectives are stated clearly and in simple language (i.e. not in marketing jargon). The authors add that agencies should be invited to understand the wider problem – to understand the context of the brief, which needs to convey project strategy and connect it to the client-organisation strategy (Kelly *et al.*, 2003).

Both the *Association of South African Marketers* and the *Association of Advertising Agencies* have merged their collective experiences to present a guide to agency briefing

(Agency pitch process guidelines, 2002). In addition the *Institute of Communication Agencies* drafted *The Client Brief: a best practice guide to briefing communications agencies* (2006), in response to the need for counter-parties (clients and agencies) to understand one another (in terms of briefing) effectively. The presentation of a brief by a client to the agency, rationalise Gladman and Melsom (2005), needs to bear high energy and discretion, which, continues the authors, will, invariably, be met with the same dynamism from the agency, making constructive collaboration more probable.

A brief is a document that records the project performance specification/s, and exists within an environment where a client wishes to introduce change within an organisation. It therefore needs to be clear, and must concisely convey the project scope (Kelly *et al.*, 2003). The process consists of gathering, analysing and synthesising necessary information to ensure an optimum solution, against which to benchmark activities and to measure success during the project (*ibid.*).

The briefing stage is iterative, reflective and interactive between client and service provider. All (especially the last) occur to aid an understanding of the client's objectives. It also helps to extrapolate or define the project's needs with regards to a creative solution that can be completed within the available time (Blyth and Worthington, 2001, cited in Kelly, *et al.*, 2003; Hall and Johnson, 2004). Kelly *et al.* (2003) reviewed research on briefs, and found that it is more an event than a process; and they can occur over one or more workshops (events) resulting in action-plans. There are two level sub-sets of briefing stages, which occur sequentially: the strategic brief, which is a high level project scope (conducted by senior management or client). The second level, the project brief, is more detailed and involves putting the project scope into tangible elements that can be budgeted (conducted by middle management or a service provider, i.e. the agency) (*ibid.*).

The methods of these briefing workshops fit into two forms. The first is facilitative, where an objective party drives the members using tools and techniques (value-, risk-, and project management), and consults literature and conducts interviews. The second form is investigative, where literature is consulted and stakeholder interviews. Of the two, facilitation is considered the better method, finds Kelly *et al.* (2003).

The authors, then further argue that if the briefing is treated as an event and facilitation is done, then, VM is a logical choice in seeking to maximise the project's client value (*ibid.*).

2.5.2. THE JOB PLAN – A VM PROCESS

A Job Plan typically consists of three sequential stages: the pre-workshop stage (preparation); the workshop stage / Value Study (VS); and the post-workshop stage (documentation and implementation).

The workshop duration ('stage 2') differs depending on many project factors (including size, complexity, development stage, cost-estimate, and so on) and can last as long as a week for large, complex projects. It is important that sufficient time is given for 'stage 2' where a VM facilitator directs an effective workshop (SAVE, 2007).

A graphical representation of the Job Plan process is represented below (Fig. 2.4) followed by Table 2.1 detailing the explanation gathered from complementary sources (Leeuw, 2001; Baguley, 2005; SAVE, 2007):

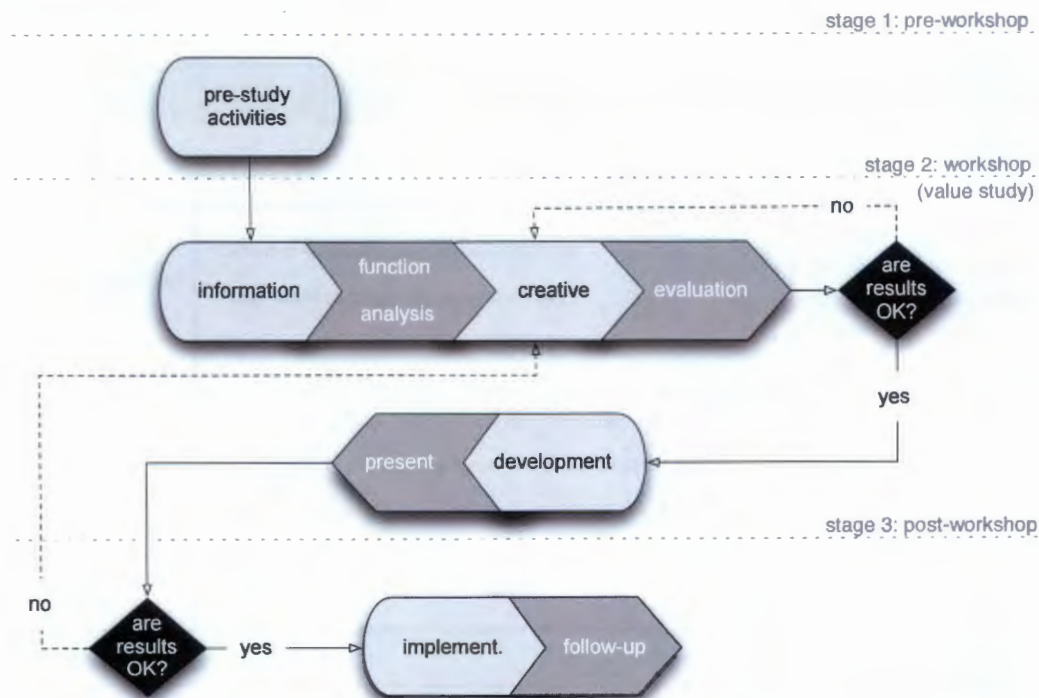


Fig. 2.4: Job plan flow diagram (Source: adapted from SAVE, 2007)

Table 2.1. The VM process

PURPOSE	COMMON ACTIVITIES	OUTCOME
PRE-WORKSHOP		
Plan and organise the VS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is researched and shared among the project team members, in succession: • Scope definition set in line with required results • Develop scope based on strategy (if necessary) • Identify stakeholders (value and project team, if different) • Gather a competitive benchmark • Brief the value team on the project • Gather, collate and distribute available client/consumer/ market/cost/etc. information • Facilitator plans workshop agenda • Organise VS logistics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the requirements of senior management, it is evident how improved value will affect the organisation • Through establishing the feasibility/viability projects are then identified as pursuit-worthy • Attainment of team members' collaboration and commitment increases probability of enhanced value solutions • Distribution, to team members, of collected project information
WORKSHOP		
Information:		
Understand project status and factors affecting decisions, via a presentation and assessment of information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective, contextual project information • Connect strategic and project concerns • Analysis of competitive benchmarking • Study schedule and sundry details determined • Absorption of project scope, schedule, budget, costs, designs, graphics, risk, issues, non-monetary performance • Confirmation and distribution of most current information • Visit market/location that the project affects (if applicable) • Confirm success parameters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring team members to a common understanding of the project at hand (through tactical, operational and project-specific information sharing) • Define boundaries necessary for effective solution-thinking
Functional Analysis:		
Understand the project through each function's composition and its relationship to other functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decomposition of functions through collective team participation (each focussing on their expertise) • Classify functions into groups • Develop function models, that reflect the groups in an orderly manner • Attach costs, performance attributes and user attitudes to functions where value mismatches will be focused during the creativity phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team assesses the project/ client's need through an understanding of its functions • The functions are then analysed (in terms of the scope with regards to basic and secondary functions) • Value-mismatched (non-value-adding) functions are focused on to illicit more value from the project

PURPOSE	COMMON ACTIVITIES	OUTCOME
Creative:		
Generation of alternate methods to perform project functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin creative session with a creative-thinking warm-up exercises • Set the 'rules of engagement' to protect the open creative-thinking environment • Use group idea-stimulation techniques (to encourage collective thinking) • Conduct team open-thinking to encourage a multi-disciplinary idea generation (e.g. brainstorming) • Harvest creative ideas to fit in line with required outcomes • Identify and utilise the best available technology • Obtain specialist interviews or involve them in the workshop to understand the topic best (if necessary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team collaborates to create a stable of ideas offering varied possible solutions to perform project functions which enhances value
Evaluation:		
Short-list the best solutions (based on their ability to enhance value in terms of system functions and lowest cost)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternatives are selected through analytical judgement, this is done through: • SWOT analysis performed on each alternative • Estimate costs of each alternative • Comparing performance of each option based on delivery ability • Rank and select the best-of-breed for further development • The top few options' risks are evaluated to assess potential problem areas • Best cited idea(s), based on enhanced value opportunity, are explained and compared in terms of risk-reward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focused list shows and explains ideas that are worth further developing to enhance project value
Development:		
Further develop the short-listed ideas for better analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential options need to be developed and refined, sequentially: • Enhance technical detail of options (including costing, rationale, designs, graphics, etc.) • Compare success parameters (identified earlier) to alternative details • Assess foreseeable implementation risks, as well as mitigating strategies • Conduct a cost-benefit analysis • Create a collective action plan to define and schedule activities as well as responsibilities for each alternative • Prepare written proposals for each alternative option 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the VS, the value team creates a document of alternatives which are 'paper-tested' to assess their robustness • This documentation is then formally compiled conveying a proposed action plan

PURPOSE	COMMON ACTIVITIES	OUTCOME
Presentation:		
Present the found options to senior management/client/others necessary parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare the VS findings for presentation. The team leader then delivers the presentation, where the following is explained: • A comparison of the study conclusions relative to the success parameters • The robustness of the proposed solutions (showing a risk-reward/cost-benefit analysis) • Full alternative disclosure • Outline a possible implementation plan • Draft a formal VS report • Record VS activities, for learning and referral purposes (if necessary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure audience full understanding of options and rationale (this ensures an informed decision is made if the audience is required to make an option selection) • The report concludes the VS on presentation to the necessary stakeholders
POST-WORKSHOP		
Implementation:		
Ensure the implementation of proposed solutions will enhance value. This occurs after the election of a solution alternative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the VS report • Conduct an implementation meeting to determine the effective application and rationale of the solution • Update the action plan (which occurred during 'development') • Gain commitment of implementation from project-stakeholder • Track the enhanced value and validate benefits • Ensure the new practices are established, integrated and managed, as well as the signing-off deliverables 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team determines how to implement the elected value solution • Practical decisions will be made regarding the effective implementation
Follow-up:		
If considered a good idea, lessons can be learnt from the VS, making the next iteration more effective.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track the VS lessons learnt and continue throughout implementation. • Identify missed opportunities. • Identify and understand innovation roadblocks. • Debrief and consolidate learnt lessons. • Convert the report documentation into a manual. • Reflect on the VS and solution, looking to understand its effect on the project. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The team/s become better value creators through understanding the course of events that occurred. • This comparison of theory to application realises a best practice for leveraging value in the future.

2.5.3. A NECESSARY FOUNDATION FOR VM

As explored in Section 2.2.1, project managers, although they endeavour to serve their client best, often miss opportunities, which can be largely attributed to a lack of procedural structure. Due to VM's rigorous yet flexible structure, it has significant advantages in this very characteristic. It assists value practitioners with the ability to work in a customised space in order to deliver the most cost effective and best solution, possible for the particular project at hand (Koga, 2000).

Provided three events hold true, the VM process will add value to the project (SAVE, 2007). The first is that the study must follow a Job Plan's phases and a Functional Analysis must be conducted. The second is to ensure that the value team must consist of multi-disciplinary members who are chosen for their expertise to contribute to the project's solution. Finally, the value manager (facilitator) must be trained in the VM methodology thereby, efficiently directing the project.

The second stage of the workshop during a VM process, the Functional Analysis, is critical to the success of the application of VM on a project. As shown in the Table 2.1, in Section 2.5.2, it is fundamental to understand the project through its 'necessary' functions. These 'necessary' functions are separated into two varieties: (1) 'basic functions' which are needed to fulfil the project's utility; and (2) 'secondary functions', these support the 'basic functions' through esteem, dependability or convenience. 'Basic functions' are essential and need to be incumbent in the product, as they add value; 'secondary functions' are reviewed where the most desired functions (those yielding the most added-value) should be retained, while the other non-value-adding functions should be stripped from the project (SAVE, 2007).

2.5.4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

To achieve enhanced value, via VM, certain roles are necessary:

1. **Management** connects the organisation and project strategy, tactically and then operationally. Management operates on a senior management as well as a technical management level. The former focuses on the open support of VM and endorses the value manager, whereas the latter is required to share their specific knowledge during the Job Plan, as a participant (SAVE, 2007).
2. **Team Leader** is responsible for the implementation, management and control of the approved proposal (often the project manager). Before the VS the team leader must

actively define the project in terms of boundaries and expectations which the facilitator will use to plan the VS strategy (in pursuit of a best solution). During the VS the team leader participates as the rest of the value team (Kaufman, 2000).

3. **Value Team Members** actively participate in the Job Plan and are identified early (during the pre-workshop stage). They represent a technical aspect of project (stated in '1' above) (SAVE, 2007).
4. **Value Manager (Facilitator)**, using collective and involved team movements, plans, leads and facilitates the VS. Facilitator-led co-ordination can unify the team and achieve better results than leader-driven groups. Through value team co-ordination the facilitator creates an environment conducive to inclusive, group participation, which is controlled (by him/her). The value manager promotes equitable forums from where any team-member can contribute to the collective thinking. Thus, the facilitator's neutrality helps an unbiased consensus, where 'best' ideas are more likely, making facilitation a great value adder to projects (Woodhead, 2000).

Thus, it is necessary to have all these elements in order to expedite a fully functioning VM process.

2.6. SUMMARY

As shown in this chapter, the potential utility for VM in the advertising agency forum is theoretically valid. After explaining basic agency, value and VM constructs, this chapter then introduced the nature and extent of some problems facing the advertising industry.

Although, these problem areas affect the agency environment, they have, however, been regarded as opportunity points, as they have been regarded as catalysts to explore alternate methods of conducting business, in order to reduce their effects. These were then synthesised and identified into nine problem areas.

Thereafter, VM was reviewed, as it might be able to impact positively on these problem areas, or at very least, a departure point which would have an impact on the advertising industry. Furthermore, the application of VM, is argued as to best occur during the briefing stage, in advertising projects. Finally, the rest of this chapter explains how VM's implementation would be conducted.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. INTRODUCTION

To conduct this study, case studies were identified as the ideal method to obtain relevant data. This chapter focuses on explaining the rationale behind the use of case studies and the execution thereof.

This chapter will begin by primarily restating the objectives of the study. After which the research design and the justification are detailed, which leads onto an explanation of the case study use. Thereafter a delineation of the selected data collection methods and the collection procedures are explained, which is followed by a description of the data analysis. The final sections of the chapter include both an account of the quality of the case study as a research method and lastly, the limitations of the study.

3.2. RESTATING THE STUDY OBJECTIVES

Chapter 2 points to an array of benefits that VM could potentially yield to the advertising industry. As Section 2.2.3 states, even though its utility was originally used in the construction and manufacture industries, VM can be beneficial to any industry. Thus, the potential utilisation of VM in another industry, namely, advertising agencies, was to be tested in this report.

The problem statement, as stated in Chapter 1, was identified as:

Advertising agencies experience technological-developmental problems, internal agency problems and client-agency relationship problems, the results of which negatively impact projects by reducing value.

Further, in studying this problem, the research questions, again found in Chapter 1, were distilled to:

1. What is the current briefing process of a project in the advertising agency?
2. How effective is the current process?
3. How can the current brief experience be enhanced?
4. Do the identified problems that exist in theory, exist in the South African industry?

5. Can VM be used during the brief stage for advertising projects?

Each question builds on the previous question, where the first explores the situation generally, and the final question peaks in establishing the applicability of VM in advertising. The view point is taken specifically from that of the advertising agency.

The guiding proposition is worded as:

The use of VM during the briefing stage of advertising projects will positively influence such projects, through early guided collaborative efforts.

The aim of the questions was to gain a better understanding of the agencies' status currency, thereby establishing whether VM's utility was viable. Through a sequential format, the questions' roles in gaining this understanding can be described as (1) establishing the nature and extent of the current briefing process in the advertising industry. Then, (2) determining the effectiveness of the current briefing process. Next, (3) it was established what measures can enhance the current briefing process. The penultimate intention, (4) was to determine the presence of the identified problems in the South African advertising industry, and, lastly, (5) explore the potential effects VM would have on the briefing process in advertising projects.

3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND JUSTIFICATION

To test the theoretical statements of Chapter 2, the next stage of this study was to conduct empirical research. The nature of the study required the impressions of agency members, in order to understand their views regarding the suggested application of VM during the briefing stage of advertising projects. Thus, their (i.e. agency members') individual perspectives of the current situation and impressions of a potential VM solution was necessary. As the study aimed to record observations and experiences of a situation, in order to identify trends, it was classified as an exploratory study.

Furthermore, a qualitative research approach was selected due to its benefits associated with exploratory studies (Leedy, 1993; De Vos *et al.*, 2005). Moreover, a qualitative methodology was favoured over a quantitative one, as the type of findings were required to describe, understand, and explain the findings (Yin, 1989). Thus a case study approach was identified as an ideal research design structure to apply for this study.

Yin (2003) identifies five applications of case studies, including the application suitable for this study – which aims to explore an understanding of future unclear outcomes through an intervention. Yin (2003:13), further, defines a case study as:

“...an empirical inquiry that[;] [i]nvestigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when... [t]he boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.”

Based on the latter portion of Yin’s case study definition, Stake (1995) reasons that, provided the system (case) to be studied has specific identified boundaries, limiting in-depth exploration, the case study is possible. Babbie (2001), cited in De Vos *et al.* (2005), explains a system to be a set of processes or a group, i.e. a company’s process in this study. Moreover, asserts Stake (1995), case studies are well used in answering ‘how’ and ‘why’ research questions; as they have the ability to bring out situational details through the participants.

Yin (1994) explains that case studies continue to retain utility in circumstances where researchers have little or no control over the situation (or the behaviour of the individual/s under study, and their competency in showing a ‘real-life’ context of a situation is better than most other methods. Moreover, as found by Eisenhardt (1989), case studies have been earmarked as a solid basis for the generation of theory in areas where little pre-existing research is present, making it adept in dealing with uncertain future situations.

Yin (2003) recommends that five elements should be present in case studies: desired/required skills from the researcher; training of the researcher to be able to perform the study; the protocol of the case study; screening of the cases; and a pilot study. The rest of this chapter concerns itself primarily with the latter three.

3.4. CASE STUDY DESIGN

The design of the case studies is crucial as it affects the quality of research and thus the quality of the findings (Yin, 2003). The design is also often influenced by the nature of the situation to be investigated, with regards to the number of units of analysis and whether it is to be a single- or multi-case study (*ibid.*).

3.4.1. UNIT OF ANALYSIS

Yin (2003) defines a unit of analysis as to what the case is. It refers to the 'what' or 'whom' that is being investigated. The unit of analysis is the major entity, issue or situation that is examined and analysed during the research. It can be individuals, groups, decisions, programs, events or other subjects (Cavana *et al.*, 2000; Yin, 2003).

As this study questions the possibility of VM's potential application during the briefing stage of advertising projects in agencies, this study uses, as explained by Yin (1994), a single unit of analysis: the advertising agency. It is within this agency scope that the area of interest lies, i.e. the execution of the briefing stage during advertising projects (as defined by Section 2.2.4.3).

3.4.2. CASE SELECTION

If (a) no other cases are available, or (b) theory is being challenged, then a single-case design is sufficient (Yin, 2003). However, multiple case studies have the advantage of strengthening the results of the findings through replication (not sampling of cases) and pattern-matching (explained in Section 3.7), both of which offer a deeper, richer understanding of a situation (Yin, 1994).

Thus, in accordance with the previous statements, two case studies were conducted (the external reliability which is explained in Section 3.8). Although more cases could have been conducted (to increase data and therefore strengthen findings), it was, however, not practical due to time and resource constraints (Mintzberg, *et al.* 1976; Yin, 1994).

Stake (1994:245) explains that *"the purpose of the case study is not to represent the world, but to represent the case"*, and the two agencies (one agency/unit of analysis per case study) were chosen based on a purposeful intensity sampling technique (i.e. they were pro-actively selected) as the identified cases were information-rich and differed significantly from one another (Patton, 1990; Yin, 1994). Patton (2002), cited in De Vos *et al.* (2005:328), defines purposeful sampling as a *"qualitative inquiry typically focus[ing] on relatively small samples...selected purposefully to permit inquiry into an understanding of a phenomenon in depth"*. However, based on conducting two studies of a large available pool, only tentative generalisations have been perused and made rather than theoretical statements (De Vos *et al.*, 2005).

To this end, Yin (2003) recommends the development of a case study protocol for reliability and formalisation of all research, specifically for case studies. The author continues that

the protocol can be explained through a five-component design: the study questions; the propositions (if applicable); the unit(s) of analysis; the analytical strategy; and the criteria for interpreting the findings. As the proposition (as well as objectives) have been stated in Section 3.2, the rest of this chapter describes the remainder of the protocol of this study.

3.4.2.1. Process of Selection

Only the local advertising industry was researched (using contacts gathered from speaking to people within the industry, making contact with agencies personally and via the telephone, and using the internet to traverse the broad range of available advertising agencies that are available in the Western Cape, South Africa). This was done for practical reasons, as the researcher was situated, locally, in Cape Town (in the Western Cape).

After conducting research on the local industry, the criteria for agency selection were identified and based on: (1) the organisation's size; (2) the organisation's complexity; and (3) the organisation's being required to operate with a national client-base in both above-the-line and below-the-line industries (as explained in Section 2.2.4.2). In terms of the first criterion, the one agency was required to be a small or medium agency and the other a large one – as defined by *National Small Business Act* (1996). It was considered that the larger the agency size the more complicated the project processes and procedures. Then, in terms of the second criterion, the one agency was required to be wholly owned by individuals running the agency, while the other was required to have a more complicated ownership structure. The rationale for this was that it stands to reason that the presence of more interested stakeholders translates into a more complex organisational structure. Finally, the last criterion was used as a benchmark in terms of the agency's ability to conduct business on a national scope and scale (which is determined by neither organisation size nor complexity).

An array of agencies was identified with the above characteristics. Many of these agencies were contacted, however, the chosen two were the first to respond positively, in agreeing to participate in the study. This was in line with Stake's (1995) recommendation of selected cases being easy and willing to participate in the study.

The first agency (Agency 1, referring to Case Study 1), is one of the largest agency in South Africa with a broad alliance base and a minority share ownership in some smaller agencies (i.e. a complex structure) as well as being wholly owned by a holding company. The second (Agency 2, referring to Case Study 2) is a medium sized agency operating as

an individual entity with ownership totally belonging to the directors (i.e. a simple structure). Both agencies operate nationally. Agency 1 solicits much business through large corporations and works largely on a retainer-basis with their clients. Agency 2 conducts much government work, which it achieves through routine tendering.

3.4.2.2. Selection within the Agencies

In an attempt to involve all project stakeholders in the advertising agency environment, a typical case selection technique was used (Patton, 1990). This type of selection was chosen as it typifies and represents the situation being examined. In this study, the participants represented agency members who would ordinarily be involved in an advertising project team. Each individual represented a different functional department within the agency.

Unfortunately, the research could only be conducted during work-hours and the study participants' work had to be supplemented by their colleagues who were not involved in the project. As a result, it was not possible to involve all project members in the study.

Furthermore, both agencies only allowed for a single iteration of the study to be conducted, i.e. it was not possible to take some members during a first run, and then take others during following runs. The agency rationalised this action on the basis of a high cost impact to the company with regards to non-utilised staff during work-hours. For the study in Agency 1 the involved parties included: The Operations Manager, Account Management, Traffic, Production, and a Business Director. In Agency 2: The Managing Director, Strategy, Account Management, Creative, and the Financial Manager.

3.5. DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Case studies have the ability to deal with both qualitative and quantitative data. Therefore, there is a gamut of techniques available to collect data. The methods available include: interviews, questionnaires, archival records, direct observation, participant observation, documentation and physical artefacts. However, as different techniques are used for different situations, not all need to be utilised (Patton 1990; Stake 1995; Yin 2003).

The research of this report utilised three methods, in chronological order; interviews, focus groups (a form of interviewing – De Vos *et al.*, 2005), and questionnaires. The time taken to conduct this research was over eight weeks (1 September - 27 October 2008), the reasons for this time frame were based on research preparation and schedule clashes

(from the agencies' perspective). A description of each research method used is presented in the following sections: Interviews, Focus Groups and Questionnaires (Sections 3.5.1, 3.5.2 and 3.5.3, respectively).

3.5.1. INTERVIEWS

Patton (1987) and Yin (2003) argue strongly in favour of interviews for qualitative research, as they help the researcher to better understand the respondents' 'world' and their perspective of the situation. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) indicate that interviews can be used well, but to strengthen the findings other sources, also, should be used.

For this study, the researcher used in-depth face-to-face interviews as a basis of information gathering, and as a springboard from which to design further research methods (i.e. focus groups and questionnaires). It was necessary for this method to occur first, as through it the pre-production process of the agency (mostly with regards to the briefing stage) was established. Further to the explanation of the pre-production process, realities in terms of project stakeholders and their relationships were explored.

As this type of information is difficult to gather through public sources, the interviewing of a person (or source) of seniority within the organisation, was regarded an adequate solution. Yin (1994) explains that interviews offer rich, insightful information with regards to the situation, and the interviewees were identified as a resource with the ability to deliver such results.

During the interview, open-ended questions were used to discuss and give insight into the agency's current situation (with the same questions used in each interview). This format provided opportunities for both researcher and respondent to discuss openly the topic in more detail, allowing for flexibility of responses, perspectives and thoughts (Lofland and Lofland, 1995).

Further, these answers would be used, later, to corroborate evidence obtained from other sources (Yin, 1994; Stake, 1995).

3.5.2. FOCUS GROUPS

Based on the input from the literature (presented in Chapter 2), as well as the Interviews (section above), a focus group was designed and conducted – as an interview method (De Vos *et al.*, 2005). The focus group forum was selected as the method of choice as it

allowed participants to air their perspectives individually, in partial groups or as a one-bodied voice, in a frank and effective manner (Barnett, 2008).

The participants were selected based on their differing departmental involvement within the agency and project; thereby representing those departmental interests, with reference to the study topic (De Vos *et al.*, 2005; Barnett, 2008). The participants represented most of the parties involved in an advertising project. There is great disunity according to researchers as to the best number of participants for a successful focus group. Anywhere between 8-12 (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999) to 5-6 (Green and Hart, 1999) is acceptable. The best work, for this study, came from Brown (1999), who states that the group should consist of 4-12 participants if the group is homogeneous and 6-12 if heterogeneous. The author continues that a balance needs to exist with regards to having enough people for a lively discussion against the danger of overwhelming the group with size.

In accordance with Krueger and Casey's (2000) recommendation, the environment of the focus group was to encourage perceptions and experiences to be shared by all parties. This created an effective environment for collective learning to materialise. Furthermore, as recommended by the authors, the researcher acted as a facilitator for the duration to control and guide the process. The focus group was structured, as recommended by Morgan and Krueger (1998), cited by De Vos *et al.* (2005), but in a flexible manner, so as to accommodate as much interaction as possible (the workshop was the common format for both agency focus groups, but customised to each agency's pre-production process). Kingry *et al.* (1990) found that, although the application of focus groups is not better than other methods, when used in the correct context, along with other sources of data collection, they can be exceedingly empowering in explaining findings.

3.5.3. QUESTIONNAIRES

One standardised questionnaire was used for both case studies, and it was the final data collection method for this research. The rationale behind the use of the questionnaires was primarily to strengthen the findings through triangulation (Yin, 2003). The question types are explained in Section 3.6.3.1.

3.6. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Although Yin (2003) recommends the use of pilot studies, conducting one was not viable in the case studies' environment (being that of the advertising agencies). As stated in Section 3.4.2.2, the agencies only allowed a limited amount of their resources and time to be

utilised during this study, and as such, the resources for a pilot study were not available. Furthermore, as each agency's pre-production stage is customised to the particular agency, a pilot study of an agency was not acceptable. This was due to the volume of work necessary to conduct such a pilot within the allotted time and resource constraints of the researcher. As a result, each case study was conducted without a pilot study.

Although the researcher executed the studies 'blind', prior to each case study, the researcher had each source (i.e. interview, focus group and questionnaire) evaluated, in terms of the contributing content. This was managed by obtaining consent from different persons. The interview questions, focus group content and questionnaire were given to four individuals, namely: a professional context copywriter; a researcher at the University of the Western Cape in South Africa; a South African attorney; and a marketing and market research postgraduate student at the University of Cape Town.

As recommended by Yin (2003) a case study protocol was designed prior to the collection of data to enhance reliability (defined in Section 3.8). The rest of this chapter explains the protocol, with reference to the data collection procedures. There are three main areas, based on the method of data collection (as explained in prior sections of this chapter) which include: interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires.

3.6.1. INTERVIEW INSTRUMENT

The interview instrument is expressed in terms of the design and limitations. Both of these are discussed in this following section.

3.6.1.1. Interview Design

Within each agency selected, a senior employee was identified as the point of contact and with whom communication and the study co-ordination occurred. Organisation from senior management was considered the best course of action; the researcher hoped that their (senior managers') active involvement would legitimise the study within the organisation.

It was these senior employees who were initially interviewed, for a duration of one and a half hours each, at an agreed upon date and time, at the organisation's offices. Interviews were selected as it was an efficient way to target a knowledgeable agency employee and elicit such information from them (Yin, 1994).

All the questions that were put to the interviewee were open-ended questions that were semi-structured, broad-based and indirect (Haigh, 1990). This allowed for the collection of

rich, insightful and comprehensive information about each agency's pre-production process and the project stakeholders' involvement (Yin, 1994). The questionnaire schedule was categorised into four sections: preamble statements and questions, process questions, stakeholders' questions, and reflective questions.

The preamble asked the interviewee some basic information about the organisation and their involvement, the responses of which contextualised the data collected in the ensuing sections. It also eased the interviewee into the interviewing process (De Vos *et al.*, 2005). The process questions collected data on how the pre-production phase functions. The questions concerning project stakeholders established the various involved entities' roles, abilities and satisfaction levels. Finally, the interviewee was asked about their reflections on each area covered in the questionnaire, with reference to strengths and weaknesses ⁴.

As the interview stage was the initial point of contact with each agency, the questions touched on a wider scope than the research questions alone (as restated in Section 3.2). This was done, specifically, to: frame the context; ensure an understanding of the agency was in accordance with the literature (as explained in Chapter 2); and to identify any oversights by the researcher. Therefore, updates of the content (done prior to the execution of each focus group and questionnaires) were done in an aim to enhance the effectiveness of the research gathered through a more streamlined design (with regards to the rest of the data collection methods).

The interviews were audio-recorded (and then transcribed) to provide a more accurate interpretation of the interview (Yin, 2003). As the interviews were the foundation of further investigations, and the outcomes of the interviews were used to design and tailor the studies for each agency, the interview transcripts were an aid in ensuring an accurate analysis of the data, which was conducted after the data was collected completely.

⁴ The interview's question schedule is included as an addendum.

3.6.1.2. Limitations of the Interview Instrument

There are issues that exist with regards to interviews (Yin, 1994), some of which can be attributed to:

1. A bias, from either interviewee or researcher, with regards to the study could be present or emerge based on poor questions;
2. The interview itself could cause a bias to emerge from the interviewee or researcher;
3. As the interview is conducted by the researcher and answered by the interviewee, misinterpretation or miscommunication of questions or answers is a risk; and
4. Reflexivity could occur, where the researcher wants to hear a specific answer and angles the questioning to achieve this, as opposed to asking questions objectively.

The researcher has kept these limitations in mind during the interviews conducted in the course of this study.

3.6.2. FOCUS GROUP INSTRUMENT

The focus group instrument is expressed in terms of the design and limitations. Both of these are discussed in this following section.

3.6.2.1. Focus Group Design

The focus group design was informed by theory (as expressed in Chapter 2) and the information gathered during the initial interviews. There were two focus groups (one per agency) which were designed to be interactive and involve agency participants. The participants were specifically required to be from different disciplines within the agency, as it allowed for a comparison and contrast to be made between differently slanted perspectives on the agency (Barnett, 2008).

Despite a prior agreement that six to eight participants per agency were to be available to form the focus groups, only four employees were present (i.e. both focus groups had four participants each). The agencies explained the missing participants' lack of availability being due to illness and unexpected business issues (unrelated to this study) that required immediate attention. The focus group, however, continued as normal, lasting ninety minutes (a time constraint imposed by both agencies), during which time each participant fully engaged with the material.

All information was recorded on video. The recording allowed for a later analysis of the individuals' as well as the groups' perspectives on the topics presented (Barnett, 2008).

The workshops occurred at the offices of the respective agencies and were had in private, away from distractions. The atmosphere was friendly and professional, which encouraged participation and allowed participants to engage with the material (Barnett, 2008)⁵. The focus group lasted a total duration of one and a half hours and was broken down into five sections:

1. Participants were presented with the nine problem areas that occur in the advertising industry, as identified in Section 2.4. They were asked to share their impressions of the nine problem areas and a discussion ensued, allowing opinions to be conveyed. This was done to establish their exposure to the identified problems in the local market, relative to the literature. (Duration: ± 20 minutes)
2. Key VM elements were presented and discussed. This was more an introduction to VM. As very little pre-existing research linking VM to advertising agencies has been found, the understanding of this construct was assumed foreign to the participants, and presented accordingly.

Their lack of familiarity with this was validated at the outset of the focus group. In order to discuss VM, the concept was explained to the participants. (Duration ± 20 minutes)

3. Each agency's pre-production process (based on data gathered during the interviews – Section 3.6.1) was shown and critically analysed. This was done by ascertaining, via the participants' input, whether the researcher's representation of the agency's pre-production process was accurate; and by further interaction with the participants regarding the subject.

Through collective discussions questions were presented to the group and answered. The rationale for the questions was to establish whether any grievances existed currently with their process. Participants were then asked questions about the process. This guided participants to critically engage in the discussion, rather than just accepting that the process was the only method in which to conduct business. (Duration: ± 20 minutes)

⁵ The focus group presentation content is included as an addendum.

4. The question of VM's potential utility was raised and critically assessed by all participants. This was done by exhibiting a potential 'new' VM-included pre-production process, focusing on the briefing stage.

This was done to establish the participants' opinions on VM during the briefing stage of advertising projects. The information that was shared during the focus group allowed the participants to consider an alternative process and validate why they believed it could or could not work. (Duration ± 20 minutes)

5. Finally, the workshop concluded with a 'questions and answers' session, the interaction of which both flowed from all participants and researcher. This allowed for any 'loose ends' to be resolved during the meeting conclusion. (Duration: ± 10 minutes)

3.6.2.2. Limitations of the Focus Group Instrument

Barnett (2008) identifies issues that are inherent in focus groups:

1. Although deep and detailed responses are required, often, in a focus group setting, it is difficult to achieve this as many influences hamper the tracking of the issue that requires most attention.
2. Individuals' reactions often vary, based on their interests and perspectives, this can be difficult to control and steer into a productive outcome.

To mitigate these issues the researcher actively addressed these through: prior to the focus group, the preparation of the focus group content only comprised the most necessary material and designed in an effective manner. Then, the event itself was controlled by the researcher in a transparent and open manner that aimed to avoid misinterpretation of other's perceptions and the material presented.

3.6.3. QUESTIONNAIRE INSTRUMENT

The questionnaire instrument was expressed in terms of the design and limitations. Both of these are discussed in this following section.

3.6.3.1. Questionnaire Design

At the end of the workshop the participants were given digital questionnaires. These were required to be completed and returned within one days of the workshop (De Vos *et al.*, 2005). Most participants adhered to this, with the exception of two, who, due to work

commitments, responded later than this and complained that there was a lack of time within which to complete the questionnaires fully.

This feedback method (the questionnaires) was designed to gather further data, and allowed parties to privately, individually and subjectively describe their perspectives regarding the content and discussions that were covered during the focus group. More specifically, the questionnaire aimed to triangulate the previous data collected, strengthening (or not) the previous findings. Each questionnaire consisted of the same set of questions.

The questionnaires were designed to incorporate open-ended, dichotomous, scaled, and statement questions, which were divided into sections with reference to the focus group discussions (De Vos *et al.*, 2005) ⁶. Respectively, these were used to allow the respondent to express themselves subjectively. It, also, force the respondent to make a statement (which was then substantiated in the question that followed the scaled question in the questionnaire). Further, it elicited subjective information that represented a degree of occurrence, and lastly delivered subjective responses in terms of their occurrences. These question types were used in order to better understand the situation (De Vos *et al.*, 2005). This allowed participants to contribute further information after the end of the focus group anonymously.

The questionnaire was long enough to capture adequate data from the participants without being too long, as recommended by De Vos *et al.* (2005). It was sent to participants with a covering letter, in the format of an email, with an attachment providing necessary details and thanking them for their participation (De Vos *et al.*, 2005). It was also segmented into five sections: briefing process, briefing personnel, briefing meetings, general agency problems, and VM. Each section required the participant to comment on questions that had been broached during the focus group, and thus helped to triangulate the data collected (Yin, 2003).

3.6.3.2. Limitations of the Questionnaire Model

De Vos *et al.* (2005) warns of the questionnaire recipient's potential lack of compliance in answering questions, as well as their potential inability to answer the questionnaire correctly or with interest.

⁶ The questionnaire is included as an addendum.

Furthermore, De Vos *et al.* (2005) caution the limitations of individual question styles. Open-ended questions take more time to do for the recipient, and are thus more liable to errors. Dichotomous questions lengthen the questionnaire by adding more questions to validate statements, this could irritate the recipient further leading to a lack of interest in answering questions correctly. Scaled questions are difficult to formulate in terms of representing intervals in the best manner, and as such, become susceptible to various interpretations, i.e. recipients do not assess the degree of difference between categories similarly. Lastly, with statement questions, answers can be answered formulaically, which will skew (i.e. misrepresent) the findings.

In an effort to avert these problems, the researcher designed the questionnaire to be short and direct, in an aim to hold the recipients' attention. The questions were simply phrased and did not hamper the recipients' response length. Colour differentiation between questions and answers made it easy for the recipients to distinguish between each. As far as possible, statements were requested to be substantiated.

3.7. DATA ANALYSIS

Methods that collect qualitative data invariably collect large 'bodies of words' that are gathered over the study duration. This data needs to be described, summarised, and then analysed to identify emergent themes. These are then reviewed against the research questions (Lacey and Luff 2001).

3.7.1. DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGY AND TECHNIQUES

Due to its non-numeric nature, there are very few standard procedures for analysing qualitative data research, and as a result of the lack of restraint, a range of data analysis techniques is possible (Miles and Huberman, 1984)⁷. However, cautions Maione (1997), the elected technique should refer to the body of work's conceptual framework (i.e. Chapters 1 and 2) with a strong position endeavouring to answer the research questions (or make statements about the propositions). Therefore, the data must be categorised to achieve this. The following section of work explains the analysis of data in this study, and how it was divided, in terms of strategy, methods and procedure.

3.7.1.1. Analytical Strategy

⁷ It is noted that software is available, however, an off-line analysis was identified as the preferable solution. This was due to the simple nature of the data and to the time required to learn the software package within the allotted time constraints.

Yin (1994), citing Miles and Huberman (1994), explains that specific techniques can be used to analyse data. The two identified as appropriate for this study include: content analysis of the findings (i.e. participants' engagement with the study matter); and pattern matching, where the findings from one case study were compared with the findings of the second. Both of these techniques provide (1) internal presentation of the findings for each case study; as well as (2) an external comparison or contrast of the agencies' situations.

Yin (2003:109) rationalises that researchers should develop an analytic strategy prior to the collection of data. This can be done through *"examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining both quantitative and qualitative evidence to address the initial propositions of a study"*. There are three strategies further identified by Yin (2003): (1) relying on theoretical propositions from the literature to focus the data on answering the research question; (2) thinking about rival explanations, where different explanations are compared against one another; or (3) developing a case description, which produces a detailed narrative of the findings and organises the case study. The case description is suitable when there is no proposition for the research or if the previous strategies are not employable.

Although any of these can be used, for this study the first strategy option was selected. This was possible as the rationale for this study was to establish the validity of the proposition (stated in Chapter 1).

Yin (2003), further, identifies techniques with which to realise the strategy. They include: pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis, multiple case data analysis and pattern search.

For this study, pattern matching was identified as an ideal method as it compares the findings of each case to the other. This is done in an effort to find patterns where the analyses offer a wider scope than that of the situation within the individual unit of analysis. This involves the comparison of the empirical and predicted patterns. Pattern matching was done in both cases.

Pattern matching deals with case study validity. However, to deal with external reliability, Eisenhardt (1989) recommends a cross-case analysis to understand specifically cross-case patterns. The focus is to allow the researcher to present the data in a way that looks more deeply than merely just at the findings. The author continues, explaining three cross-case tactics that exist: select the categories and look for within- and cross-study

commonalities and/or differences; select a pair of case studies and list the commonalities and differences between each; and, lastly; divide the findings into data sources to identify a unique insight from different types of data collection. This study utilised options one and two, where the findings are compared between each study and with the theory. Thus, as recommended by Creswell (1998), this study analyses the data, which is a multiple case study, with both within- (i.e. pattern matching) and cross-study analysis (i.e. two case selection).

3.7.1.2. Data Analysis Methods

This study was analysed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) three-phase qualitative method, the activities of which occur concurrently. This method can be applied to both within- as well as cross-case analysis of multiple cases and begins after the data is collected. The method involves:

1. **Data reduction:** This helps to focus and organise the data, allowing for ultimate conclusions to be drawn. Data can be transformed by selection, summary, paraphrasing for both within- and cross-case analyses. However, for cross-case analysis it can be compared to the theory as well as each study. Data needs to first be coded and then categorised into themes to direct the data to answer the research question.
2. **Data display:** The reduced data then needs to be shown in an organised, economic fashion, to allow conclusions to be drawn from it. Both text as well as diagrams work well; and matrices can be used for analysing patterns with regards to the research questions.
3. **Conclusion drawing and verification:** At this point an endeavour is made to interpret the findings' meaning. This concluding section is done through the act of noting regularities, patterns, and explanations, which results in the analysed data and evaluating the implications of this meaning to draw a conclusion.

3.7.2. DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE

The data collected through interviews, focus groups, and questionnaires, were analysed using the previously mentioned strategies, techniques and methods. The following expresses the activities that were conducted to analyse the data. Each case was done individually and in the sequential order of events.

3.7.2.1. Within-Case Analysis

The within-case analysis comprised three stages. The first stage (i.e. the interviews analysis) consisted of primarily audio recording the interviews, which were then transcribed by the researcher. The transcriptions were necessary as the content of the interviews was used to direct the content of the focus group and questionnaires.

The second stage (i.e. preparation for the focus group and questionnaires) of the within-case analysis began by collecting the data from the interviews as well as the theory (found in Chapter 2). These were used to design the focus group content. In order to analyse the interviews, a manual work through of the transcriptions was conducted. This required the use of highlighters and a 'pencil and paper' method to gather like data into themes. The theory section (Chapter 2) was electronically gathered, too, into themes. The final themes were collated into topics, and this topic-structure was the format of the focus group content (see Section 3.6.2.1).

Prior to the focus group event, the questionnaires which were to be answered by participants following the focus groups, were sent out. Then, during the event, an audio and video recording was taken documenting the full duration. After the focus group, the questionnaires were returned to the researcher (from the participants) via email. These were in a digital format, and thus, required no further digitising. Lastly, the recordings from the focus group were then transcribed.

Once all the data had been collected, the material was cohesively collated, and this occurred during the third and final stage of the within-case analysis. Group topics were thematically categorised according to the research objectives (identified in Chapter 1) which encompassed the research questions (and thus the aim of this study). On the strength of these objectives, the interview transcription content was divided up into these topics. After which the focus group transcriptions were thematically categorised according to the same format (as conducted for the interviews). To differentiate between the different participants' inputs, during the focus group, colour codes were used. Lastly, each case's questionnaire responses, too, were then collated in accordance with the grouped categorisation.

Each source as well as each case was processed individually. The grouped-content findings were then reported in a logical manner, in Chapter 4, the findings chapter, and Chapter 5, the comparison chapter. The report was designed to answer the research

questions, by presenting the found data in a contextualised and relevant way. These themes were the result of data reduction and data display.

3.7.2.2. Cross-Case Analysis

In order to analyse across the cases of this study, each case's findings were compared relative to one another case. The study objectives (which were informed by the research questions) were headed as topics, where only the salient points of each case's findings were summarised, shown and discussed.

After the cases were compared against one another in Chapter 5, the data was discussed to interpret the study's findings. This was done through the drawing of conclusions and verifications, based on the findings relative to the statements of the theory. Finally, the last chapter (Chapter 6) drew to a close the study, through assessing the research questions, and the guiding proposition relative to the case findings. The aim was to inform the viability of the guiding proposition of this research. Thus concluded the research report.

3.8. QUALITY OF THE CASE STUDY DESIGN

There are, however, criticisms of case studies, due to their inherent qualitative characteristics. These include questioning the data validity and data reliability of the method, with regards to the data collection procedures, and it is necessary to confirm the solution of both elements of criticism (Yin, 1989).

3.8.1. VALIDITY

Validity of the cases refers to the accuracy which the study reflects and that the researcher is trying to measure. Validity occurs on both an external as well as on an internal front (Palmquist, 2008). The author continues, explaining that the former focuses on the generalisability or transferability of the findings, whereas the latter tests the research design's rigour.

A contentious aspect of case studies states that single cases do not provide conclusions sufficient for generalising beyond the context itself. However, this statement is met by strong opposition, rationalising that the goal of a study with a relatively small number of samples should establish the parameters and then should be applied to all research (Hamel *et al.*, 1993; Yin, 1993). Yin (1984) found that to appreciate the utility of case studies, it is inappropriate to assume that some samples of cases have been drawn from a larger universe of cases. This is not the situation, as each individual case consists of a

'whole' study, where facts are gathered from various sources, and on which conclusions are drawn.

Thus, to address the external validity of the study two separate individual case studies were conducted. The conclusions of these findings would therefore assist in the transferability through the comparison of the one case study against the second. Moreover, the type of advertising agencies differed significantly from one another, which strengthens external validity (Yin, 2003). Although, this study employed an inductive approach, where the findings would help build theory (Perry, 1998); the researcher has endeavoured, rather, to name the discoveries as that of tentative conclusions rather than theory.

To support the internal validity a study protocol was developed (found within this chapter) prior to conducting the research (Yin, 2003).

3.8.2. RELIABILITY

Reliability refers to the degree to which the study's tests realise a common result on repeated attempts. It is from this that satisfactory conclusions can be drawn (Palmquist, 2008).

The reliability of the case studies was achieved through the use of multiple data source collection methods which included: interviews, focus groups and questionnaires (Yin, 2003; De Vos, 2005). These data were assembled, primarily, to triangulate findings to formulate an holistic representation of the situation (Stake, 1995).

Two of Miles and Huberman's (1984) identified triangulation methods were used: data source triangulation, where the researcher reviews the findings, assessing whether the data will remain constant in different contexts; and methodological triangulation, where one approach proceeds another to increase confidence levels. In the first situation, the information gathered through the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires, was compared across the methods. Differing responses of the varied methods, media or participants were incorporated into the report. With the latter triangulation method, the findings of the interviews were presented in the focus groups and in the questionnaires. This gave the participants ample opportunity to confirm or dispute statements made. Thus the findings and statements were strengthened through triangulation.

3.9. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In conducting this study, there were identified limitations. These were inherent in the study and were based on factors that were out of the control of the researcher. They include:

1. The limited amount of time and resources available to the researcher from the agencies made it difficult to acquire all data regarding the situation (i.e. total and complete information that is available to the agency environment).

To manage these limitations the scope of this research has been focused toward the problem statement as far as possible, through the research questions and objectives. Furthermore, the time used with the agencies has been utilised as effectively as possible through preparation and spreading the data gathering forms across different methods.

2. Due to the nature of the study, questioning the current format of the way in which business is conducted at their agencies, the study participants have possibly not answered and/or engaged the study in the most honest manner, due to potential organisational politics.

In solving this limitation, various methods of collecting data have been triangulated on both an individual basis and in a group.

3. This study looks at VM as a potential solution to enhance the briefing stage of advertising projects. However, VM is only one potential strategy, among many, to achieve the same goals.

As VM is the focus of this study, this research report is focused here. However, it is acknowledged that other potential solutions exist.

4. The researcher's lack of activity and experience in the advertising arena made the access and acquisition of information difficult.

To remedy this, the researcher has engaged, as far as possible, with other research and materials to assist the study conducted. The researcher has also been transparent with the participants in terms of the lack of advertising agency experience and has requested guidance where appropriate.

3.10. SUMMARY

This chapter began by restating the research questions, objectives and proposition of the study, as stated in Chapter 1, which frames the conducted research. The research design and the justification thereof was then discussed, indicating and validating the study construct and type. The unit of analysis was defined, and the cases selected was explained.

The following sections then discussed the data collection methods and procedures, respectively, which described in detail the activities in conducting the interviews, focus groups and questionnaires. Thereafter the data analysis explanation was reviewed in terms of the strategy, techniques, methods and procedures. After which the quality of case study design was substantiated, in terms of validity and reliability; and lastly, the study's limitations and mitigating actions were presented.

In the following chapters, the findings and discussion chapters are presented. These chapters put into practice the activities expressed throughout this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

The impressions of the varying study participants, from both case studies, are documented and presented in the following chapter. This chapter is divided into six sections: a background of the agencies; the current briefing process; current process effectiveness; enhancing the current briefing process; presence of theoretical problems; and a VM briefing solution. These topics are discussed for both Agency 1 and Agency 2.

For the sake of brevity contracted reference terms have been used for functional roles within the agency environment, rather than full titles. They include: Account Management – AM; Business Director – BD; Creatives – C; Creative Director – CD; Client – CL; Finance Manager – FM; Media – M; Managing Director – MD; Operations Manager – OM; Product – P; Strategy – S; Traffic – T; Agency 1 – A1; and Agency 2 – A2.

In the following chapter (i.e. Chapter 5) the findings of A1 and A2 are then summarised and compared with one another.

4.1. BACKGROUND OF THE AGENCIES

The background of each agency's involvement is presented below.

4.1.1. AGENCY 1

To explain the findings, A1's background is divided into company description, study participants and location and then the atmosphere of events (i.e. the nature of the interaction between researcher and participant/s during the interview, focus group and questionnaire segments of the study).

4.1.1.1. Company Description

A1 is the larger firm of the two agencies, and one of the largest advertising agencies in South Africa. It operates as the Cape Town division in a national organisation, with other branches in Johannesburg and Durban. The regional head offices are in Johannesburg and the organisation's international offices are in New York, United States of America, with the parent company being run from London, United Kingdom.

A1 partners with other smaller companies, distributing project work to them, where possible. It also operates as a minority holding company to other specialised and smaller advertising-related businesses. From these relationships the agency shares in profits. The

agency employs roughly two hundred and forty employees at any given moment and, as necessary, outsources work out to partner and held firms.

A1 conducts all business on a national basis, and the type of work they are involved in includes above-the-line, below-the-line, retail and interactive. Above-the-line and below-the-line have been explained in Section 2.2.4.2. Retail and interactive, respectively, comprise fast paced advertising from local, regional or national retailers; and advertising on the internet.

The agency is well balanced and diversified in relation to its work. They take on work from large, 'blue chip' organisations to small, medium and micro enterprises; they also take on government and public sector work as well as *pro bono* work. Much of the work in which they are involved originates from the CL (whether new or long-standing) who approaches them. Some of the work originates through the agency identifying an opportunity which can be translated into a business opportunity, and a small proportion of the work is acquired through tendering.

Most agency work is performed on a retainer-basis, and originates from large CLs who require advertising on a continuous basis. The agency remuneration (in this relationship) normally operates on a fee and bonus basis (for effective work). A high percentage of their CLs have a long-standing relationship with A1. There is also a large volume of work that occurs on a project- and 'as necessary'-basis.

4.1.1.2. Study Participants

A1's OM participated in the interview. The OM has been with the organisation for roughly five years. He originally came into contact with the agency's marketing department while with one of A1's CLs. He joined the company in an operations capacity to assist with the running of the organisation.

The following A1 personnel participated in the focus group and completed questionnaires: T, AM, BD, and P. Each was at a different stage of experience in their career. The BD had the most time's worth of experience in the advertising industry. The T participant originally operated as a traffic manager in the event-promotion industry and joined the organisation approximately four years ago. The P staffer has worked in agency production for some years, and the AM employee, the youngest of the group, has had three years in the industry, at the agency.

For identification of individuals this study prefixes individuals' names with A1; thus, A1OM, A1T, A1AM, A1P and A1BD.

4.1.1.3. Location and Atmosphere of Event

The following section explains each activity and method of interaction in terms of location and atmosphere during the event.

1. **Interview:** The event was conducted in the OM's office. The meeting lasted from 14h00 to 15h30. The atmosphere prior to the event was pressured, due to work commitments and related tension stemming from the interviewee. The interviewee wanted the interview to be conducted as quickly as possible. Once the interview commenced, the interviewee got into the interaction and participated well. Although the researcher felt uncomfortable with the manner in which the interview began, he was able to continue and conclude the interview in a relatively open environment. Much information was acquired from this interview.
2. **Focus Group:** This meeting was located in another, larger boardroom within the agency. The focus group commenced at 11h30 and concluded at 13h00. A co-ordinator of the event, from the agency, informed the researcher that another meeting was scheduled in the boardroom from 13h00 which placed pressure on the event to be completed by then.

The researcher controlled the meeting through engaging the parties as necessary, and allowing an open dialogue to progress freely. However, when the event needed to move on with the content, due to time constraints, this was done. The atmosphere was professional, open and pro-active, and confidentiality was ensured. However, there were moments, primarily during the presentation of the VM concept, that the participants were unsure of the value of the content relative to their industry and work.

At 12h30, during the focus group, the co-ordinator briefly interrupted the event to remind the researcher of the imminent required termination of the meeting. This immediately put pressure on the meeting to conclude, with value, and thus, during the last thirty minutes of the focus group, the researcher was not able to explore commentary and perspectives as comprehensively as preferred.

Questionnaire: These were e-mailed to participants prior to the focus group and were completed in the participants' own time. The questionnaires were concluded in

an economical amount of time and returned, via e-mail, to the researcher. Both the A1BD and A1P returned the questionnaires later than twenty-four hour deadline. However, their contributions were accepted.

4.1.2. AGENCY 2

To explain the findings, A2's background, too, is divided into company description, participants, and then location and atmosphere of events (i.e. the nature of the interaction between researcher and participant/s during the interview, focus group and questionnaire segments of the study).

4.1.2.1. Company Description

A2, the smaller agency of the two, operates independently as a medium sized agency, with roughly forty employees and, where necessary, freelance staff are employed contractually.

It conducts much of its business nationally. The type of work conducted by the agency includes above-the-line, below-the-line, retail and interactive projects.

The largest percentage of A2's work originates from government and the public sector. This sort of work requires that the agency goes through the tendering process. Another large source of work for the agency comprises of companies that require below-the-line work.

Most of the jobs are project-based, where CLs arrive with a problem and leave with a solution, created by the agency; only to return later in time with more required work to be done. A2 has few retainer-based CLs, where there is a standing agreement and a CL who deliver briefs continuously. With retainer-based relationships, the agency does work on a 'need to' basis for a set monthly rate, rather than a per job basis.

The agency feels slightly more comfortable with retainer-based CLs than with new or project-based CLs. This is due to regular work that retainer CLs provide, and for which they can plan. Payment for retention-based CLs operates on a fee for the work done and where applicable, bonuses for effective work.

4.1.2.2. Study Participants

A2's MD participated in the interview. The MD, originally a teacher, was offered employment by the founder and Chairman of the organisation (A2). The two met when both parties were teaching, prior to advertising endeavours. She (the MD) has been in the business for roughly the last ten years.

Like with A1's focus group, the participants involved in the A2 focus group were required to complete questionnaires. The participants consisted of functional agency roles: S, AM, C, and the FM. The group had a varied experience range. The S has worked as a copy-writer as well as in strategy and has employment experience in the United Kingdom as well. The AM had much local agency experience. The C was experienced although the youngest of participants. The FM had no formal advertising training, and works largely in the business operational financial area of the organisation and was not project specific.

For this study the individuals were prefixed with an A2; thus, A2MD, A2S, A2AM, A2C and A2F.

4.1.2.3. Location and Atmosphere of Event

The following section explains each activity and method of interaction in terms of location and atmosphere during the event:

1. **Interview:** The event was held in a boardroom of the agency offices. The meeting lasted from 08h30 to 10h00. The atmosphere prior to the event was rushed, due the interviewee's needing to deal with business matters prior to the interview. Although, once the interview commenced the atmosphere was calm, friendly and professional. This allowed for an openness between both interviewee and interviewer to ask and answer questions freely.

The A2MD had been sent the research proposal of the study, which she brought into the meeting and answered some of the questions with this proposal in mind.

2. **Focus Group:** This meeting was located in another, larger boardroom within the agency. The focus group was due to commence from 08h30 and conclude at 10h00, however, some participants were late and thus the event only began at 09h00 (which pushed the meeting to completion at 10h30).

The researcher was advised that there was a meeting scheduled for 10h30, which created some pressure to complete the focus group content. The researcher endeavoured to keep the meeting as controlled as possible, and the agenda moved along swiftly, to ensure content completion. These circumstances created a stressful situation on the side of the researcher, however, the participants were kept unaware of this.

The atmosphere of the focus group began in an open, professional and friendly manner from all parties. Although, during the period discussing VM it seemed that the participants were not interested in the construct and looked confused as to how it would affect them. Thereafter, when the topic of discussion returned to the situation in A2, the participants pro-actively re-engaged in the content of the focus group.

3. **Questionnaire:** these were e-mailed to participants prior to the event and were completed in the participants' own time. The questionnaires were completed in a timeous manner by the participants and returned. The A2F was the only participant who submitted the questionnaire late, all other participants responded within one day.

4.2. THE CURRENT BRIEFING PROCESS

The following section establishes the nature and extent of the advertising agency briefing process by presenting the findings of each agency studied. The briefing process of each case is explained around a wider pre-production process (Section 4.2.1 and 4.2.2) and graphically represented in Fig. 4.1 and Fig. 4.2, respectively.

Each coloured pentagon-block is a stage in the process. The buttons at the bottom right-hand corners of each pentagon-block indicate the participants involved in the stage. The black buttons reflect involved parties and the grey ones reflect parties who may be involved in the stage. Each stage will be specially denoted by underlined text when first described in context.

4.2.1. AGENCY 1

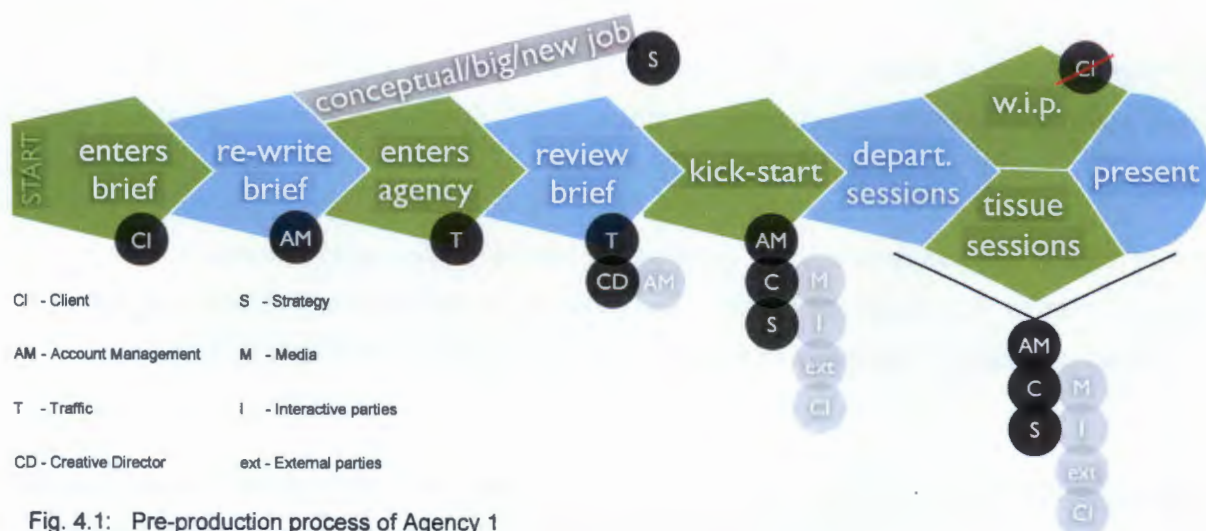


Fig. 4.1: Pre-production process of Agency 1

A1OM began the explanation of A1's process by indicating that, in the current business environment, incoming briefs ordinarily arrive at A1 in an electronic form, however, many are presented to the agency verbally. The brief can be a result of the CL approaching the agency with a clear brief (a requirement of work to be done) or with a business problem (a more open brief). Alternatively, A1 often identifies opportunities for CLs to take advantage of, which they then recommend. A1OM then explains:

"The brief would enter the agency via AM, who has the relationship with the CL... If the CL has not articulated a specific brief, then sometimes the agency can articulate a proposition [in order to get the brief into the agency]."

A1AM indicates that, if it could be considered a useful tool in assisting the CL to draw up a brief, AM will send the CL a brief-template stating the information required by the agency for an effective brief. However, continues A1AM, the delivery, by CLs, of sub-par briefs is a common event. As a result, A1 has designed a built-in 'safety net', so that when a brief of some dimension has been presented to AM, it is more often rewritten into an A1 standard document. This document is designed to communicate the CL requirements in a useful manner so that various involved departments can understand what it is that is required of the project. A1AM states that there is an emphasis on it being right the first time.

This is the minimum entrance requirement of any project into A1, states A1OM: the strength of an A1 draft offers, at a very early stage, the widest possible gamut of insight, given that it has been drawn up by AM, who understands the agency perspective as well as the project input detail needs. It is by contributing to the early project stages, in a useful manner, that helps C realise project solutions.

A1OM explains that, once the agency brief is drafted, it might require a certain degree of steering toward an informed position. Thus, some projects begin utilising resources early. Where,

"if a large, conceptual or new job [enters the agency]; it would most likely go via S to ensure that [the] brief has been drafted in the correct way. [Here,] adding input, in terms of brand, market, and CL, from the outset [ensures] correct project inputs [are considered, helping project efficacy]."

The next stage involves the brief 'queuing' to enter the studio (where creative work is conducted) and the assignment of a project team. Prior to the studio, T will handle the brief with regards to the scheduling of the resources. As a result, the brief enters the agency

system formally, states A1OM. A1T asserts that holistic project monitoring (i.e. T) is necessary in agencies, due to the volume and speed of work.

A1OM explains that, once the project has entered into the agency, there are slight differences in the pre-production activity that exist among above-the-line, below-the-line, retail and interactive advertising. He continues, that these specific differences are tailored and catered for. However, even though the activities differ, the overarching process is practically identical.

Ordinarily, above-the-line is more conceptual and normally produced outside of the agency (i.e. not executed in-house). Therefore, the brief can be more open allowing for effective lateral and 'good' thinking. In planning the execution of the brief, a knowledge of what is available (and the best sources thereof) in the allotted timeframe, is key to project planning success.

Whereas, below-the-line is often highly production-intensive and detailed (the work is mostly executed within the agency). The brief can be open and/or more prescriptive. In these circumstances (below-the-line projects) the increased complexity and activity of the agency requires more planning during the briefing stage.

Retail, on the other hand, is specific as it undergoes a very fast turnaround in mass volume. This brief is mostly prescriptive and the execution is ordinarily through a print-house, where the communications are printed en masse. This method uses a template-method, where a template is set up during the first 'run' of the project and all future work is based on this specific template update system, the work offers little room of ingenuity and is highly time constrained.

Lastly, interactive jobs can either be more characteristic of below-the-line or above-the-line, as it all depends on the specific requirements of the project. As such, they need to be dealt with accordingly.

Once in the agency, the brief is then interrogated by T and the CD to identify the best resources, explains A1OM. AM can also be involved in this process if the brief is not clear, or if further insight is needed.

The CD matches the brief's vision with an available C, and T plans the project activities for the whole job. This is done by finding necessary resources (both within A1 and from third parties), establishing their availability, and booking their time for the project. A1OM

explains that, if T understands the brand and project requirements, it makes them far more effective in matching skill sets with work at hand.

He then further develops the process:

"Once the team is set, a kick-start meeting is called by CD, all internal participants – C, S, AM, M, Interactive, P, External Producers (radio, television, press, etc.), maybe even [the] CL, [meet]. As T and [the] CD see necessary, or might add value, [required project participants] should be present. This ensures that they understand the brand, brief and specific goal of the project. Based on a good brief, the C can decide on a (creative) direction at that point and from there, begin creative work."

A1AM clarifies that kick-start meetings happen more often with larger, conceptual projects. The meeting is a verbalisation of the brief, where the objectives, in terms of the "ask", timing and cost is explained and discussed. AM controls the session, where they ensure, as far as possible, that all project participants are represented and heard.⁸

At this point, A1AM finds that it is critical that all the A1 team members understand the brief-parameters, "else we waste time" on misguided work. A1T adds that the kick-start often allows the team to brainstorm ideas for the project.

To create an environment that is conducive to creativity, AM spends much energy in preparing the venue and the approach to tackle the brief best, explains A1AM. Otherwise, the project participants will not respond in the best way, which most likely will impact on the project. "There is nothing worse than an account manager just reading the brief", shares A1AM, it is uninspiring and a waste of time. An interactive and exciting workspace encourages collaboration. However, A1AM continues, "again, it came back to a time problem," so setting up these kick-start meetings does not happen as well as they could. A1OM extends the explanation of the kick-start meetings, stating that:

"[It] makes sure the agency has all the necessary inputs for a successful project and much time is spent thinking about the best solution, where it is necessary to really understand the brand."

A1AM explains that a well-organised and facilitated kick-start meeting results in useful information, that allows the different project parties the opportunities to thrash out their

⁸ A1OM states that CLs would ordinarily not be a part of the kick-start meetings, unless they are capable of such a meeting (i.e. they understand the process and have the ability to add value to the event).

varying perspectives, with regards the brief. A1T agrees that the *modus operandi* is a good departure point for the agency participants to make clear what the brief is, and provides clarification as to what is required of them for the project.

The next step finds the C designing the conceptual feel and copy (i.e. how the advertisement will look and what the message will be), describes A1OM. This conceptual work occurs cyclically, where the first iteration is reviewed and commented on by the department, and leads to the second iteration, and the third, and so on. These internal creative cycles occur with departmental meetings (where project participants present the work they have done to their team leaders). The final iteration is confirmed by the group-heads as a sufficiently adequate piece of work.

Then (A1OM describes), to gauge internal progress of the project with all other departments, work in progress sessions and tissue sessions are both held during similar points in the pre-production process (although they are different meetings). The former allows all project members to meet, update and assess each others' progress. This ensures that all are working to a common goal, and only A1 participants and required suppliers will be present. The latter includes the CL and occurs at project milestones, where A1 shows the work done. CL feedback is necessary for project progress, and, depending on the project-type as well as necessary creative work requirements, this will dictate the degree of CL-agency interaction.

Finally, the CL presentation occurs, concludes A1OM. At this point, the agency work (as per the brief and any changes along the way) is presented in a 'scamp' (rough-layout) form. Normally, multiple creative options, which tackle the problem in different ways, are presented to the CL. The presenter who conveys these solutions to the CL is ordinarily AM or CD.

4.2.2. AGENCY 2

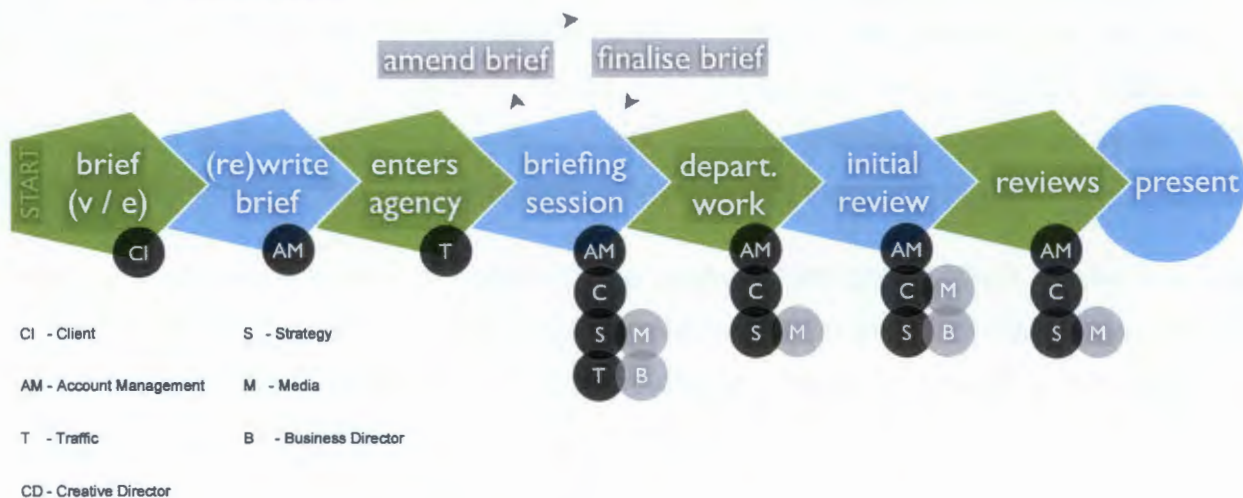


Fig. 4.2: Pre-production process of Agency 2

Assuming an opportunity (or tender) has been converted into a job by A2, begins A2MD, and that A2 understands the CL's business (i.e. it is not a new CL – or else, there are CL learning steps involved); the agency is presented with a verbal or electronic piece of information which represents an incoming brief of some dimension. This incoming documentation is ordinarily a result of a meeting between A2 (either BDs or senior AM) and CL, and where A2 has a good sense of the CL's requirements for the project.

Then an AM representative is assigned to the project. Their first task is to (re)write the brief based on input from the CL as far as possible, *"but also our own sources, where necessary,"* continues A2MD. This occurs because, most often, research needs to be conducted and/or information gathered to formulate a sound starting point for a project. A2MD goes on to say that a full brief consists of many elements, including: *"what the job is, what the target market is, who the target market is, positioning of the product (service), or the brief will explain at what position the process must arrive"*. Using a template, the brief is written without the CL.

Once the A2 brief is drafted, it is then sometimes vetted by others within the agency, clarifies A2MD, and enters the agency. More often, if more staffers (than only AM) were involved in the incoming briefing session, then they will verify the brief efficacy, expresses A2AM. She further clarifies, *"Although there may not be a formal signature, [often] there is a group meeting where there is an agreement between CL and the agency."* This only happens for larger projects.

The brief then enters the agency, via T, who calls S, C, and M to a brief appraisal (i.e. to look over the work to be done), explains A2MD. T, though, first ensures that the coming brief is correct and begins planning for the required agency resources, A2C elaborates. A2MD explains that, to prepare for the project, T opens 'job-bags' (which stores the CL's and project's details). This is done on both a physical and electronic system.

Agency members are then assigned to the project, through T. A2MD briefly lists the agency members that would typically be assigned: a CD with a C team, AM, S, and M – for above-the-line. Then, depending on the project size and complexity, a BD might be involved to ensure that the job is executed smoothly.

Once the team is compiled, states A2MD, T then co-ordinates an initial briefing session (such a meeting may not occur for small projects) ⁹. All project team members must be present, A2S adds, as the aim is to help all parties understand the breadth and depth of the brief. During which time, explains A2MD, much discussion occurs to, as far as possible, understand the brief and job. If necessary, brief amendments will be made to ensure the brief is completely correct.

The meeting is controlled by AM, ordinarily, explains A2AM, however, this can shift as necessary to the project technician, or be directed by a senior staffer (e.g. S or BD). Although, responds A2S, as the brief has been drafted by AM, the flow of the meeting is mostly controlled by them, but *"it's not a top-down theme and [the] hierarchy is flat. Everybody gets involved, where [all] people are heard."* To this, A1AM extends:

"With agency ideas, I'm the gatekeeper for the CL. If I know there's no way the CL will buy into an idea then I need to stand my [and my CL's] ground. But, if it's (an idea) a possibility, then I need to go try sell it to them as a better solution."

A2MD clarifies that A2 has an open and honest policy, where participants are listened to at every available opportunity. This gives them the opportunity to positively and actively contribute to the efficacy of the work. In a brief session, A2AM elaborates, it is necessary to get the brief right, and this means that the scope or whole brief can change. A2's briefs endeavour not to be descriptive, A2AM adds, the agency tries to keep them as 'open' as possible. This allows for the best ideation attempt, by C, later. After this meeting the brief is then finalised.

⁹ Within the briefing session stage, two events happen, cyclically, where changes are made. First, and only if necessary, the brief is amended and then it is finalised. These events can happen any number of times.

After this, A2MD continues, the project team splits into departments and begins work on the project, based on the finalised brief from the brief session. AM and S might conduct further research, where necessary, before C begin their detailed work. This is to buffer and validate the final brief. During this time, satellite departmental meetings occur within each department to ensure each department's work is correct and of the best quality.

Some days later, after departments have conducted their work and each department head is satisfied with the work, an initial review occurs, explains A2MD. This meeting, comprising of all participants, focuses on the concept of the project – ensuring no facets were overlooked during the briefing; and reviewing the conceptual work that has been conducted thus far by the project participants.

A2MD adds that, after the first review, further reviews occur every few days, to continue touching base with other project participants, and on the conceptual work completed. These meetings help measure deliverables and ensure A2 is on the correct course of action, where all members are heard and collective participation and criticism is encouraged. Only necessary parties are present during these meetings. All amendments, realised during the various reviews, will be captured by the AM, directed to T and will refine the project (where all participants work toward the most updated end-goal).

Finally, AM organises the CL presentation, where A2's research, vision and budget (all of which are based on the brief) will come together as a cohesive whole. This presentation translates the brief into a final concept or the concept and executive plan, explains A2MD. Whoever is best suited to deliver the presentation will do so (usually AM or C). A2S explicates that even if there are internal agency issues and disunities with regards to the project at hand, on presentation, there are no individuals, only the agency – a team.

A2MD concludes that the advertising industry pre-production process relies heavily on personal engagement, which is highly emotive and subjective, and states:

"This method works for our agency and it is very similar to most agencies. It is the same process for above-the-line, below-the-line, retail [and interactive], with obvious tweaks where necessary... So, it can, [crudely,] be said that one size does fit all."

4.3. CURRENT PROCESS' EFFECTIVENESS

The following section reviews the brief process, the meeting process and other peripheral issues. The main points express the study participants' impressions and dissatisfaction with these elements.

4.3.1. AGENCY 1

This section pertains to A1.

4.3.1.1. The Brief Process' Effectiveness

A1OM stated that, often, briefs from CLs can be done without a certain level of quality needed from A1, and quips:

"apart from telling them it is a [bad] brief, the key is matching the right AM with CLs, to create a good team. [In] this way, AM, where necessary, can guide the CL through the process to produce a brief of the best quality. This could mean that AM writes the brief for the CL."

All study participants agreed that incoming briefs from CLs are not done well. Both A1AM and A1T rationalised that the reasons for this are closely related to the fact that CLs do not have sufficient time for their ordinary course of business, let alone the time to necessitate writing a strong brief.

Furthermore, often a CL does not know what their own needs are, with regards to a project, and AM personnel will try to aid this. A1BD believes that, with the support of other A1 staffers, such as the senior BD or S, this is possible, whereas A1AM feels that it is dependent on the experience of the AM. A1P further argues that, where CLs do not know what their needs are, AM only 'jots down' what has been explained to them by the CL and that no further problem solving is conducted, he continues, *"[it is obvious,] you can pick this up in the job brief"*. A1T neutralises the discussion by concluding that *"the account manager can only try [to understand what is needed] but this is dangerous as it... leaves gaps for potential 'mis-briefs', [and so on]"*.

A1OM believes all that is necessary for a brief to be regarded as good is for it to be concise and clear, indicating to the agency (and where necessary, other early project members) the necessary information of a proposed project. However, this is easier said than done, explains A1AM, as there is no set process. This makes it relatively complicated to execute a brief. Moreover, it is quite tricky because, while expressing an idea or a

problem that needs to be solved is inherently a subjective exercise, which one endeavours to document it in an objective manner. In any brief, he continues, there is a significant amount of information that needs to be documented, collated, arranged and presented for others to understand what the “ask” is. A1T remarks that, if not done effectively, this can cripple a brief, as is more often the case when they are written in a hurry. She attributes this to the significant time pressure placed on A1 staff, and where possible, AM personnel try to relieve tension in order to move the process along. Nevertheless, brief creation is often performed with great haste, and, despite innocent intentions, this haste often translates into carelessly compiled briefs, where details are incorrect or incomplete. Consequently, agency briefs, too, are not always done well.

A1T then extends the discussion on brief quality, stating that brief-detail is critical, especially with reference to traffic and planning a project properly. Without detail, a project cannot effectively go through A1. If information is not solicited initially by the AM, a process of CL interrogation has to occur in order to acquire this necessary information – which wastes time and resources. Worse still, if the project enters the agency and the brief is not right, the project has to return to the early creative stages. A1BD clarifies that, if AM personnel are uncertain of a created brief, they should have their BDs or S review it – at this stage errors can be mitigated without major repercussions. However, she continues, this ‘touching base’ with managers often does not happen, and such setbacks occur. Obviously, this is not efficient and slows the process down.

A1AM then explains that, to simplify brief drafting, some departments have tried to standardise a brief, in template form. This at least gives the writer a guide as to what should be present at the end of the brief writing process. However, besides necessary, specific inputs, *“there’s no real process. [There is] no, ‘this is how you write a brief’.”* A brief can be written in a myriad of ways, and certain methods will work more or less successfully depending on the person writing it: i.e. standardised best-practice steps do not apparently exist, and if they do, they are not common knowledge.

To even further complicate brief-writing matters, A1AM believes, most AM personnel have different training, and many are not advertising trained. In drafting a brief, AM individuals use all the skills they have acquired, over time, to try understand what is required of A1 by the CL. Given that they have not been taught to think collectively, AM individuals think differently, and this makes the brief created (by AM) very unpredictable. A1AM expresses

that, ultimately, *"it's down to initiative [and] what you (the AM) perceive the CL's 'ask' [to be]"*. A1P finds the function of a brief is a catalyst to explain to others what the CL wants.

Moreover, believes A1AM, although briefs are meant to be right – in terms of what the CL needs – there is no way of knowing it is right. AM can only hope that they have understood the CL correctly. *"It comes down to experience or [something you] learn very quickly, [with regards to] what [the] studio needs, for what jobs,"* he shares.

The risks of drafting a brief that *"[is] not what the CL needs [or] asked for, or possibly [even] that there is not enough information to elicit clever creative thinking,"* are immense, states A1OM. The risks increase if AM does not understand the people, brands, CL and/or market. It can be detrimental to the project, and possibly to the relationship with the CL. *"And it's quite scary,"* cautions A1AM, alluding to the drafting of a brief, *"the first brief that goes out to [the] studio, pretty much results in the final work. So if the brief is not right, the first time, you are on a road to disaster!"*

To mitigate these (and other) risks, it is normal agency practice, internationally, to have CL sign-off on proposed work (Arens and Schaefer, 2007). However, A1P and A1AM express that a brief sign-off from CL only happens on very large projects, otherwise, it is not common practice. A1P rationalises that this is due to urgency during this stage of the project, and therefore a lack of time. In fact, continues A1T, this lack of time can often be the root of problems for many advertising projects. It is the nature of the industry. *"Everything we do is short cut, it's about [the speed of] getting [work] out, which is completely wrong. But that's how it has become!"* states A1T, alluding to industry impetus on profitability, resulting in diminished quality products.

Another radical concern, conveys A1AM, is that, often, C do not read briefs. A1T then remarks:

"If we didn't have a kick-start meeting, we'd be in big trouble because they (C) don't read their briefs. [Furthermore,] you cannot engage [with them] via emails, [the best is to] just present them with the raw information."

To further compound this, if the brief is written badly or in a convoluted manner, they (C) will refuse to read it. If bad briefs were subverted it would make the early project stages far less stressful. Furthermore, adds A1T:

“there’s a lot of time and value wasted [with bad briefs] because T needs to hunt for information, or the brief is not up to the standard we need and so T goes back to AM, who [then] needs to engage [with] the CL”.

A1T further expresses that it is critical for AM to present a brief that is completely correct by the kick-start meeting. This is often the final point to solve project problems, beyond this point, solving fundamental problems becomes increasingly complicated.

4.3.1.2. Meeting Effectiveness

The kick-start meetings are efficient and a good place to solve problems, asserts A1BD, as at this point the agency is confident with the focus of the project and the solution. All the study participants felt that during the kick-start meeting, all the project team members’ voices are heard, which adds weight to decisions made, with the exception of A1AM, who believes that often the differing philosophies between C and AM are irreconcilable and personalities also can get in the way.

In terms of the input brief, it was found (via the study participants) that, on average, a scope change occurs 25% of the time with projects. This has a far reaching cost implication, expresses A1T. A1BD believes that the scope changes can be attributed to CLs’ changing the brief during the process. Furthermore, she finds, they (CLs) expect the same delivery time.

CLs are ordinarily not involved in the kick-start process, unless urged to attend. However, ‘Junior CLs’ (as phrased by both A1AM and A1OM) would never be involved, due to their lack of agency experience, which would significantly slow the process. A1OM explains that CL absence is preferable, as they might hinder or prolong the meeting, which can disrupt the agency process.

A1P finds that the final outcome is indicative of an effective kick-start meeting, which is measured by the level of clarity attained by C (i.e. the success with which the brief is communicated to participants). A1AM agrees, stating that kick-starts need to have good energy and allow participants to think freely and share ideation. However, if AM is just reading the brief without any drive, this meeting (and likely, the project) will not be as good as it could be, A1AM cautions. Having said this, though, A1AM does not believe that the kick-start session can be quantified or ‘pigeon-holed’, but that it is determined by the ability of AM to offer a workspace within which team-members can collaborate. However, due to

an open sharing of views, kick-starts have also been known to trespass into a negative confrontation zone, which can strain the project and relationships.

Alluding to the ramifications of brief miscommunication and C's failing to read the brief, A1AM shares that *"it [can be] quite frustrating!"*, he continues, *"much time and energy is spent putting all the correct information together, and at the first Creative Department session we (AM) realise that the work [done by C] is all totally off-brief or wrong"*. This occurs because the brief has not been read, leaving AM in the position where, *"all work going into the studio, surprisingly, needs to be monitored"*. To which A1T adds:

"that's why... you have [work in progress] reviews, and we do – as many as we can before it hits CLs. So that [AM] doesn't see it a day before presentation and [realise] it's completely off, from what we briefed them."

Alternatively, argues A1AM, *"you get too prescriptive too. [I] micro-manage [to the point] where sometimes I kill all creativity"*. If the brief leaves too little room for creative thought, then C cannot do their job, and this is also a problem. A1T agrees that a degree of creative freedom is necessary.

A1T confides that, sometimes, a kick-start occurs without a fully-completed brief, and that this has dire results, i.e. the AM delivers a brief which is incomplete (either due to their own inability or to lack of information from the CL), and participants work off this incomplete brief, compounding the problem. She explains that situations like this can waste time, frustrate other project members and can result in negative conflict.

4.3.1.3. Peripheral Noteworthy Issues

A1T believes that, in today's marketing environment, due to technological developments and freer information availability, the agency, CL, and marketer's position is blurred. Thus, different companies exercise varying activities along the marketing supply-chain, which impacts on suppliers (i.e. A1), their services and distribution.

Another angle of the same point, offered by A1BD, is that advances in technology have also allowed for smaller advertising agencies to 'mushroom' all over. These agencies can deliver a relatively good product for a fraction of A1's cost and in a far shorter time. Such a situation, she continues, reels in CL dissatisfaction, as they expect solutions that are better than those from these smaller companies (as would be realised through A1), but want to

be charged what the smaller company would have charged them (and in their turnaround time), which is not possible for an agency the size of A1.

Moreover, A1T continues, this agency industrialisation has converted agencies into 'profit-driven machines', where:

"today it's [i.e. advertising] so driven by money and [this factor seems to supersede anything else]. [Creative inputs] are [now] more expensive (our time, product, etc.) so C [are, most often,] not able to push the briefs further than [merely] what [is being asked]."

This impact is most often due to the cost factor. Thus, the ramification of CLs' unwillingness to pay for extra work encourages them (CLs) to, as far as possible, do their own advertising. A1T states that the upshot of this is that agencies often become involved in projects at a late point, which disallows *"clever creative thinking from A1."* Further, A1T adds, *"C are getting frustrated, and [query] the lack of traditional agency work, where the CL [comes] to us for solutions".*

These compounding effects have augmented the function of agencies into executors rather than thinkers. Furthermore, agencies are finding the exercise of defining and expressing their ability to add value to a project more difficult than experienced historically.

A1AM finds that, in his experience, when dealing with CLs, in general, they quite often regard their marketing budget as a 'pie that needs to be split'. Furthermore, they often have other hidden agendas, with regards to the job, that is not presented to AM (e.g. reaching a certain sales target), and therefore not integrated into the project. The CLs 'hidden' concern then becomes their (CL's) main focus of the project, rather than the overarching point with regards to the product or brand.

This impacts on the efficacy of the project's product, and this lack of transparency can often lead to project difficulty among participants. Such an environment makes A1's project team's work more complex than it needs to be, and this is not how A1 likes to operate. A1 prefers to work on a partnering basis, where the brand and future vision are explained by the CL to assist A1, and the CL collaborates, forming the impetus of the relationship. However, continues A1AM, *"many CLs, especially new ones, regard the agency as [a] supplier, but we are not [a] supplier [we are far more than that]."* A1T adds to this, expressing that many CLs regard C as 'doers' and not an integral part of the campaign's creative process. Such prescriptive situations, states A1AM, often put C in a position with

little room for creativity of ideation. In these conditions CLs are often also 'closed-minded' to C's perspective.

A1 also experiences some incredibly difficult CLs, clarifies A1AM, who, (1) will not listen to C, (2) will not reason with C as to the validity of their (CL) ideas, and (3) engage adversarially. Good C are often not prepared to work with such CLs. This type of engagement makes the advertising experience unpleasant and difficult for A1. The studio and much of the agency regard these as "*bad CLs*".

4.3.2. AGENCY 2

This section pertains to A2.

4.3.2.1. The Brief Process' Effectiveness

Historically, agencies were given six weeks' turnaround time, to present to CLs. However, A2MD finds that, with advances in technology, and business becoming faster all round, today A2 most often has two weeks from briefing to presentation – even for large projects. A major reason of this, she continues, is due to the emergence and volume of small agencies. These companies are small, agile and 'hungry for work'. They hire in skills and their solutions are not best, but, they are effective. However, due to the availability of these services, which produce outcomes faster and cheaper, CLs expect more. This has become the major new threat for more established and larger agencies.

What sets agencies like A2 ahead is the quality of solutions, their track-records and their relationships with CLs, A2S explains. This is something A2 focuses strongly on, increasing the understanding of AM's role to serve their CL and their needs – which can only be built over time.

In such an environment, projects ordinarily come in two forms, A2MD explains. The first, the situation where the CL knows what they want, is a simple case of executing their request. However, where there is an open brief, or the CL is unsure as to what it is they want, relationships and mutual understanding become important, and herein lies A2's competitive advantage, as they understand their CL. In such situations the ability to source solid, effective information is critical, and A2 offers this. Often, in situations of the latter kind, a team from A2 will be briefed by the CL. Once AM has drafted the brief, the other members will review it, ensuring efficacy.

However, A2AM, not convinced of the delivery by A2 on such promises, states that this is *"not always"* the case. Sometimes this process is not as simple as described and sometimes A2 or AM do get the brief wrong. In such circumstances the brief has to be rewritten, which is costly. *"It's an incredibly difficult thing to write a brief,"* she expresses, and continues:

"You have to try write it as objectively as possible, but you sat with the CL and you know that[, during which time] your mind is [running ahead], you want to give some direction, but you know if you give too much direction, [they will feel] 'what are you trying to do – their job?' So, it's difficult and you need to [just] get as much information [as possible]."

Thus, A2AM implies, it is necessary for AM to engage the CL in a manner where they remain objective, while steering their CL in a direction that endeavours to realise an effective solution for the CL. A2AM continues, explaining that the basic activity of brief drafting comprises:

"hav[ing] a brief template – and you plug into that – [including] the notes you have taken from the CL, what you know of the CL, from what you think you can assist the C with, in terms of giving them some tools."

There are no sequential steps to get from 'a' to 'b' in completing a brief, she stipulates. Moreover, complications arise when one then involves human communication and personalities. A2AM then remarks that, *"It is [also] very rare for a CL to present a written brief. If it happened, it would be fantastic"*. Thus the input variables of a brief differ from project to project. Some CLs are sophisticated and have a lot of information about their brand, and so on, but for the most part A2's CLs do not have such detailed information.

This is the nature of the industry, where writing a brief is subjective and it can be *"dangerous"* to be overconfident. Moreover, A2AM believes that there is a brief clarity problem, which is realised when briefs enter the studio. This clarity problem leads to misunderstanding which can originate from both CL and agency. Such situations are very problematic.

One of the clarity problems, explains A2C, is that briefs need to be written in a manner *"explaining how wide the creative scope can go"*. This dictates the degree of openness with which C may interpret the project – where C often feel the wider the better. Although this is mostly delivered by AM, sometimes it is not as transparent as intended, and the results (from C) can vary significantly. He continues, emphasising that it is critical to begin

a project with clear direction. A meaning one person delivers can be interpreted differently by a second person, which can be very risky. A2AM then continues:

"[As] you (referring to AM) were a part of that brief process, maybe you understand the CL more [than others]. [Sometimes the C will have worked with the CL, sometimes not] and you (AM) need to give them (CL) as much information about [elements] they don't know."

A2MD reasons that the activity of writing a brief, despite being the goal of a project's primary steps, is merely catalytic in relaying a message from the CL to the agency, resulting in a product. Thus, A2AM sums up, writing a brief needs to be done clearly and quickly. Furthermore, in some situations, and mostly only as a courtesy, *"after the creation of the brief [especially for large/complicated work], it is sent to CL. [However,] no CL approval [or sign-off] is sought"*.

Although, ordinarily, only AM drafts the brief, A2AM expresses that it is *"always better to have input from others to confirm content"*. However, both A2S and A2C feel that this can, most often, be unnecessary and wasteful of resources. A2S expresses that, ordinarily, CL fully informs AM, so the input of others, at this point, is often redundant. A2C believes that AM should *"collate thoughts and ideas and send it around for feedback,"* as a good way to seek approval from others, through consultation.

4.3.2.2. Meeting Effectiveness

After the brief has entered the agency, the project team has a good opportunity to grapple with it during the briefing session. A2AM and A2C confirm that, during that time, all project participants are encouraged to voice their concerns. Although this seems fair, A2S debates, *"some voices are louder than others... But, in principle, it's a democratic Q and A session"*. A2C extends the discussion on tackling the brief once it has been drafted, by stating: *"my role (as a Creative), in the briefing process sometimes only happens after the briefing session"*. This is as a result of only being invited to see the brief then. *"[Often], I have questions, which [AM] can't immediately answer... [which they then need to find out from the CL, and this] slows the process down quite a lot... [and] there's so much wasted space and time"*.

"Frequently", he continues, *"I begin reading [the brief] and get excited, but then get to the end and am often disappointed."* Where he feels *"it would be nice to be involved in that [i.e. creating the brief], but I'm not sure how much value I could add!"* A2AM concurs, stating that *"in a medium agency [of this size], it's impossible to have C in every brief"*

meeting. *There's not enough time, we don't have enough resources!*" Furthermore, she continues, *"some C don't like being in briefings because they find it boring, or not what they [are meant to] do."* She validates this statement, rationalising that:

"These meetings can go on for a long time and C often feel they are not beneficial in [such an] environment. [Rather,] they can add value from when the brief hits their desk and they can start work."

A2S vocalises a slightly different concern:

"Sometimes, it happens that [other project participants] only see the brief for the first time [during or just before the brief session], but I'd prefer to get it before [this]...[so that] I [could] start thinking about [creative solutions]. The brief session is seen as, 'here's the brief, go start work, you only have 3 days', or whatever, to do it."

He concludes that, if the brief were delivered in good time, the rest of the agency would possibly deliver better ideation during the brief session.

Another problem area that hampers briefing session efficiency (which all study participants agreed on), is that although most often briefing is successful, a significant difficulty is effectively *"[acquiring] the brief first (from the CL), [as this is most] important."* The study participants found that in most cases, where problems arise, they can be attributed to the brief's not having been detailed completely (by the CL) with the necessary information.

A2S states that, whatever the reason, whether the fault of CL or AM, it does seem evident that CLs do not understand the value or importance of an early plan as a starting-off point. A2AM agrees, expressing that, in most cases, if the CL has not furnished information, AM is as uninformed as the rest of the agency. AM then often enters into a process of information solicitation that is 'stop-start' in nature (i.e. information is collected in continuous little batches as the CL is able to contribute). A2AM goes on to say that this manner of data acquisition significantly lags the pre-production process and affects project time and resources. A2MD clarifies that, despite complaints about the length of time that information delivery takes, and given that time is almost always at a premium, AM still has to monitor all the departmental activities, to ensure that the correct work is done and that individuals are not creating their own off-brief ideas.

Returning to the discussion of the briefing meeting, A2MD shares that the environment can be harsh, in that each department is open to the full criticism of the rest of the project

participants, which is very honest. She adds that personalities and egos are very involved, so even though there is this strong process it is only a necessary starting point, where *"if people do not respect or like one another, this will have a big impact on the work."* A common result is negative conflict, which complicates the process.

Another direct effect of sharing ideas is the realisation of a scope change. Half the study participants believed this situation to constitute roughly 20% of projects. Nonetheless, the participants find this to be a normal activity in the process, and attach little significance to the implied cost.

A2AM concludes by validating the value of the meeting, stating that, ordinarily, *"everyone understands what they need to do after the meeting"*. This is incredibly empowering.

4.3.2.3. Peripheral Noteworthy Issues

A2MD explains that A2 does much of its work on a tendering basis, which is costly. Nonetheless, the agency has a few retainer-based CLs, too, who *"feed us briefs"*. Yet, for the most part AM and BDs still need to identify opportunities (for these retainer CLs), then approach the CLs and present these opportunities as value adding events which would be advantageous to pursue. A2 then needs to convince CLs of the value of work to be done, and only then would work be converted into a project. A2MD believes that this process of fighting for work (which happens often, as opposed to situations where A2 'falls over' briefs) is a difficult but necessary process. A2 is a smaller agency in the market and it has to fight for survival, which keeps the agency members humbled.

There are always those projects that result in problems or dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction, explains A2AM, can occur both during and at the end of a project, *"it's a hard pill to swallow"*, and it might not even be the agency's fault, but it occurs more often than not. A2S elaborates that, even if it is the fault of the agency, the fault might not necessarily lie with the brief, mostly it has to do with limited time and resources, or changing of scope (by the CL). An example is the time lag between work coming in and the time it takes to enter the studio, as A2C explains: *"CLs like to think they are our only CL, [this always] presents problems – [and] always, at the last moment!"* These solutions are costly, adds A2AM.

All dissatisfaction, A2S feels, *"obviously affects the [business] relationship [and the project], to a degree, often it can be [resolved] but if it's a continual thing that's an ongoing problem"*.

A2S believes that it would be an interesting experiment to involve the project team earlier or during the briefing stage, however, in an agency this size it would be difficult. C are especially worn thin in terms of their available time, thus, trying to get more work out of them would be too resource-intensive on their part. Where possible, A2 tries to involve as many individuals as early as possible, but this is rarely fully achieved.

Moreover, CLs are not normally involved during the pre-production process. This is normal industry practice, and for good reason. A2AM explains that, especially during the brief, *"[as] you [would be] getting a CL to be forceful in an environment where the C must [be able to think freely] and the CL becomes [restrictive]"*. Furthermore, A2C adds, the CL should not need to be involved, as their contribution should have been effectively compiled by AM earlier. A2AM further explains that CL involvement at this stage would stifle the process, due to their not being as familiar or fluent in the industry or organisation as the immediate agency project team. *"I [also] don't think C respond well to [confrontation]"*, she states. Furthermore, A2S believes that the CL often has an immediate *"no-thinking attitude"* where they are not open to brainstorming and exchanging ideas, and that this mostly frustrates A2 participants.

A2C concludes this point, stating: *"I'm happy [that] they are not in [the brief meeting]"*.

4.4. ENHANCING THE CURRENT BRIEF EXPERIENCE

The following section reviews ways to enhance the briefing process within each agency. The views presented below originate from within the respective agencies.

4.4.1. AGENCY 1

The necessary departure point, states A1AM, is obviously a well-informed AM. They need to understand the full context including the CL, market, brands, and the product.

A1P expresses that, if the agency knows what the CL's goals are, *"this would make the brief so much better"*. He feels that *"asking the right questions, most of the time, [can solve many problems]. I can see if the person writing the brief [does not] know what they are talking about"*. It is necessary for AM to guide the CL through the brief process, and always to be in control. This can mostly be done, he finds, through a 'question-answer' process; and where confusion or uncertainty ensues, communication will resolve this. He then extends this discussion, stating that it is not sufficient for the AM member to merely listen and write down the CL's information. This means that AM is not exerting any control and it

results with the meeting ending without A1 completely acquiring fundamental information. Where this occurs, A1P continues, the brief will not be to the requisite A1 standard. This has a related cost to the project, CLs and A1.

Moreover, A1P believes that AM needs to be trained with investigative and human-interaction skills to help them find the 'real questions and answers' of the project. This is a good tactic when the more direct 'question-answer' method fails. The obvious information should not always be the focus of attention, as 'hidden' information can sometimes give A1 the most direction. A1P states that, once this information has been expressed, the brief created by AM should be comprehensive in terms of relevant information.

A1AM considers that S's (and other available departments') involvement could be utilised more efficiently and more extensively. He feels that, currently, their utility is limited due to the lack of available time for each advertising project. This makes involvement from added parties difficult, as the window of opportunity is very small. Further compounding the problem, as A1T explains, is the fact that other agency resources (e.g. S) require their own lead time (i.e. in order to get into these departments' queue), which makes their availability even more limited. As a result, A1AM confesses, most often, AM skips S's (and other departments') involvement, or use their services on an ad hoc basis – only where necessary. This is unfortunate, A1T remarks, as *"it could be saving us a lot of time by doing [S] up front and getting it right [early on in the project]"*.

A1P raises a perceptive issue, observing that A1 credits CLs with knowledge of agencies or marketing, and brands *"junior"* CLs with little advertising experience, as not capable and as time and/or money-wasters. This CL engagement is fundamentally flawed, and A1 needs to accommodate CLs across the board, adjusting to CLs' varying levels of experience and knowledge. He suggests that, to remedy this, *"CLs, too, need training"* on an ongoing basis, with more in-depth and longer sessions (i.e. not only an initial hour-long seminar presenting A1 and a simplified overview of advertising). A1T feels that this training should also be made available to A1 employees, to ensure consistency and currency within the agency. A1P concludes the point, stating that education of this nature will make CLs far more useful from the project initiation stages (i.e. the brief) and throughout the process.

Currently, during the early stages, A1 intervenes with CLs after they have briefed the agency, where necessary, in an effort to redirect misguided CLs. A1OM describes this

steering process as, typically, an attempt to enhance the proposed CL solution through an agency-based recommended solution that has not been considered by the CL and which might yield better results. For situations like these, sometimes *"we need to push the CL and make the job better – but this needs to be done, else the project is left in limbo,"* which is not good for any party. The reason for an idea being 'left in limbo' is based on a 'bad initiative' (i.e. the proposed CL solution) not being regarded as 'good' by C, and therefore not aggressively pursued by C. A1AM insinuates that, because C have their names attached to projects that they work on, their lack of aggression in pursuing 'bad initiatives' is based on an unwillingness to sully their reputations by having their names linked to a 'bad' idea.

A1OM feels that, all things considered, A1 is lucky that it has such strong relationships with their long-standing CLs, *"[which allow the agency] to express to the CL [its] concerns,"* and that this transparency empowers relationships and projects. If this did not occur, *"the agency would not be doing its job properly,"* and would only 'throw down the gauntlet' where necessary. A1AM states that, in addition to existing A1-CL relationships, it is of fundamental importance that AM has a trusting relationship with the CL, or else there is no basis for collaboration. *"Mutual respect and an understanding of the CL is absolutely necessary; it all factors down to [a personal] relationship and the strength thereof,"* explains A1OM. However, he continues, this process of challenging CLs can be a *"normal"* one or a *"difficult"* one, dependent on many variables. The opportunity for the agency to affect CLs requires a very mature relationship, which the agency respects, and understands is not present in all relationships.

A1OM states that, *"the agency needs to make its voice heard until the point where it becomes counter-productive,"* at which point they would need to accept the CL's position and move on. A1AM disputes this, stating that many AM staffers at A1 do not challenge CLs where they should, and they know this. A1T expresses a different view regarding this point, stating that some AM employees seem to deal with briefs as if they become another person's problem once they have entered A1. Much of the time, this early short-sighted behaviour (e.g. failing to take ownership of work done) can result in a radically larger problem than if issues had been identified and dealt with during earlier stages.

A1AM shares another factor which AM can apply as a remedy: the ability to motivate the project participants into delivering the best available ideas, through the brief. If the brief delivered by AM into the agency is boring then it will not stimulate others. This does not

assist the project cause. However, he continues, the time to deliver a brief is so short that, as a result, creating a *“glitzy campaign presentation”* is practically impossible.

Examining the process, A1AM notes that:

“[In the kick-start meeting] we try solve... the problem presented (by CL). It’s all about engaging [with] the creative side [of the agency]... and getting their buy-in.”

This infers that the problem is not solved when the brief is drafted, and that the brief is merely a document collating information. A1T clarifies that, as a result, the scope of work can change in kick-start meetings. As this is largely due to contact with others, which mostly results in better solutions, A1T rationalises that it must be regarded a good activity, as it enhances the solution, even if there is an implicit cost.

A1T states that, all things considered, most often collaboration occurs along the pre-production process, and the solutions that are presented by A1 to the CL are absolutely the best ones possible *“within the allotted time and resources, with the available information and direction from CL”*. It must be kept in mind, however, that (as stated before) half the study respondents found that, on average, 20% of projects that are presented have to be reworked due to CL’s dissatisfaction with the outcome. This carries a significant cost to all participants, states A1T.

Thus, these errors can persist even after collaborative efforts. A1AM insists, however, that these situations are never the fault of the brief, and that this can be safely deduced as all brief issues will have been resolved prior to this point. The most common cause of errors was cited as scope creep and a lack of clarity between the CL and A1. This has a direct added – unnecessary – cost. Although A1P agrees that these changes result negatively, A1P argues that, by returning to the project (to satisfy the CL), the rework would produce a far superior result. A1AM states that, ultimately, if more effective collaboration occurred earlier, this could yield better communication and understanding. This might enhance the final product result.

The final problem that A1 should consider is the duration required to complete the pre-production process. It ordinarily takes three weeks before a brief enters the studio (i.e. before any conceptual creative work is done, which is prior to any actual execution work for the project), and six weeks to present, says A1T. It is very long, and it shows how busy A1 is, however, the CLs do not care and are not satisfied with this turnaround. A1OM

defends this position, stating that the agency needs to be positive that it is right, rather than merely throwing ideas around, and this takes time.

4.4.2. AGENCY 2

Understanding the CL helps with the agency's expectation, explains A2MD:

"The world has changed. Each CL differs radically [from the next,] with all trying to get a piece of the market. We cannot expect CLs to act and conduct business like it was [conducted] twenty years ago. Briefs come in different shapes and forms, and the agency needs to accept this and accommodate for it. If the agency had to pigeonhole CLs based on what was done years ago – this is a problem."

As stated above, today business typography varies radically, and as a result, some businesses are marketing or advertising wise and others are not. In situations where the latter holds true, most often, they need more agency assistance. A2MD states that A2 understands this and has actively elected to take business opportunities where possible, welcoming the full gamut of CLs.

However, remarks A2AM, some CLs are good and some are completely hopeless (when it comes to the direction and information they give the agency). When A2 receives briefs from CLs, explains A2S *"no direction is a problem but tightening the scope too much can be a problem, too,"* to which A2MD agrees. A2S continues, saying that an open brief with enough direction is best. This means that there is an explicit direction, however, there is a sense of openness for the studio and A2 to pursue the required result. A2AM supports this perspective, stating that, *"either you have to bring out your crystal ball (i.e. no information) or it's too tight. [Often] they (the CLs) don't know what they want until they see what they don't want"*.

A2AM explains that the quality of information also differs between different projects and CLs. She complains that often the agency has to work with the information it has available, however poor it may be, especially in situations where CLs are not available, or do not know answers. Sometimes, A2 continues a project with information they have and it has turned out to be wrong. Thus, it is always beneficial to understand the CL, brands, market, and so on. from as empowered a position as possible. A2AM continues, stating that this often comes back to the relationship with the CL, and whether AM has a strong enough relationship to return to CLs with questions to gain better clarity or not. She advocates presenting CLs with the information that they presented to A2, and getting into a

discussion about it as a good starting point to understanding the CL better. This always empowers the project from an informed position.

However, A2S points out, all of this peripheral work requires more energy, and this work volume, although necessary, can sometimes be difficult to accommodate in a medium-sized agency such as A2: *"In our organisation there are one person departments, where ordinary operations push resources as far as possible"*. Thus, as can be expected, extra work significantly stresses agency resources, whereas, in larger agencies, this problem is far smaller, if it exists at all.

A2AM explains that, when A2 presents to the CL, *"we state: 'this is what you asked for, agree[d?]' And based on that, here's the work."* This is necessary in order to avoid disagreements with CLs (where the expected work differs relative to the actual work done). A paper-trail supports and validates A2's actions and logic. Obviously, it is necessary to resolve the problem in the quickest and best way, but, to be responsible, one must understand that *"there's a lot of money and time that gets wasted [on abortive work]"*. She states that these situations arise from both A2 and the CL. She cites the example where *"the CL [does] not know what they want; and therefore want the agency to solve their problems [and they do not like the result. Or] the agency get[s] it completely wrong. It's dangerous [either way]"*.

There are points along the pre-production process where CL and A2 meet, and during these meetings there are situations where a high propensity for conflict exists. Mostly it is positive conflict (i.e. in a quest to enhance the final product as far as possible), however, negative conflict does exist, although A2 tries to keep this to an absolute minimum.

A common point of conflict is where CLs are challenged with regards to their ideas. A2MD believes that this is a necessary activity:

"We have to challenge the CL when necessary, because this industry is about creative professionals, but we have to choose our battles. It's about the path of least resistance often, and at the end of the day, they are still the CL and paying for services."

It is necessary to steer CLs towards the final best result, and A2 does, but within limits (i.e. A2 does not seek to damage CL relationships).

However, there are projects where bad situations cannot be resolved, and as a result project reworks occur. This constitutes 20-40% of all projects coming in, according to half

the study participants. A2AM defines a rework as a project that is, strategically, neither necessarily wrong, nor completely right in terms of the final required product. A2C experiences 'redos' on a weekly basis, where work has to be completely changed as it is not right. He explains that these ordinarily happen more with smaller jobs and in situations that are more 'black and white' in terms of CLs liking or not liking the work done. He maintains that they are unnecessary, but constantly occur. A2S states that reworks are unavoidable. He deduces that situations where these occur could be a result of the CL changing their mind about work, or of the economy changing the business landscape, and so on. He points out, however, that it could be argued that maybe a more informed process could help in some circumstances.

A2AM feels, though, that briefs cannot be 'held hostage' (i.e. blamed) for a project's product resulting in dissatisfaction or rework, as there are too many factors.

A2MD believes that, while not a pleasant exercise, most project problems can be resolved. On presentation of the work done, A2 prides itself on excellence. A2MD feels that A2 delivers the best solution within the available resources and time. A2S echoes these sentiments and adds, *"the CL might not think so [but that's another story]"*.

4.5. PRESENCE OF THEORETICAL PROBLEMS

The problems as cited in Section 2.4 were compared with A1 as well as with the industry, and then with A2 as well as with the industry, respectively. The study participants of each case study answered, as far as possible, with reference to their own experience of the cited problems within their own agency and with reference to their perception of the industry at large.

It was interesting to note that when these questions were asked to participants they seemed awkward about the topic and uncomfortable responding when their response could be construed as casting a negative light on their respective agencies.

It seems evident from the study participants' responses that CLs are, for the most part, satisfied with solutions produced by both A1 and A2. Both agencies run an annual evaluation with CLs, and openly discuss successes and failures. Both A1OM and A2S stated that, based on the agency's success, CLs award annual bonuses. The findings and responses from the problems are listed and discussed.

4.5.1. AGENCY 1

1. The selection of creative solutions is based on organisational politics, individual status (i.e. the agency hierarchy), and aggressive campaigning of ideas. The selection should rather be based on the merits of the solutions themselves.

In considering this statement, more than half the participants felt that this case was true for A1 and all felt it occurred in the advertising industry. A1AM admitted that he experienced this regularly, where the direction of the project is often driven through other causes rather than the strength of the project itself. A1BD, on the other hand, felt that it occurred only to “some extent”, she was not prepared to believe that this is common practice at A1.

2. Creatives are only included on projects after brief and strategy completion, giving them little latitude to enhance the project at a conception level. Creatives would enjoy contributing with their input early to impact the project conceptually. They do not have the opportunity, and thus they often do not buy-in to project solutions.

All participants felt that this is the situation for both A1 and the industry. A1P expresses that, in his experiences, “[C] see it as you dropping problems on their doorstep... it’s perceived as your problem that you are giving to them... Instead of working together”.

A1AM explains, however, that this is not solely a C issue he states strongly that it is an agency-wide problem, “there’s no feeling that we all work to a common goal, it’s more ‘I do my job you do your job’”. This sense of individualism has a negative slant as project teams should be collaborating for the greater good. A1P supports this, stating:

“there’s not enough communication...information does not come through from AM to us (production personnel) and that affects our utility and we have to draw that information out, [which] affects the job.”

A1AM responds, explaining that they are only as effective as the information the CL delivers to them. Often there is ineffective AM employees who accept everything the CL tells them and do not clarify the information or “push back” the CL (i.e. challenging their ideas). This information then is collated and put into the agency, and the rest of the project team eventually find a weak brief at their feet during the kick-start.

Moreover, AM is often seen as the CL by the rest of the team and becomes the ‘project-frustration punching bag’ when there is a lack of clarity or efficacy in the brief. This always results in a time and resource problem, which frustrates project participants; and the CL

does not seem to understand that the value of the input will radically affect the project. A1P states that this all comes back to asking *“the right questions”* in the beginning, and that the project team has to appreciate that this comes with experience.

3. Different departments within agencies are increasingly insular as a result of different disciplines/backgrounds. This creates an ‘us and them’ mentality within the agency, where separate departments have vastly different ideas regarding goals and measures of success. This has a negative effect on projects.

More than half the participants felt this to be the case in both A1 and the advertising arena. A1P did not believe it occurred in A1. A1BD describes a situation where AM and the CL are in opposition to C and S. This happens too often, and results in unnecessary friction. A1AM breaks this down into components, and explains that any agency’s internal ability is built on the relationships between C, AM, S and M. AM have a particularly difficult time, as they interact with all relationship members the most, and the success of their function is largely dependent on the other parties’ efficient delivery. Thus, they need to keep themselves on every party’s ‘good side’ – which can be very difficult. However, sometimes these relationships can be adversarial, which severely affects the project. This is a naturally-occurring relationship pitfall, as AM’s purpose is to represent the CL within the agency. Often, this inadvertently brings about the *“us and them mentality”* between the CL-AM camp and the rest of the agency. A1AM advises that, in such situations, the next step often is to engage the CL in order to result in a collaboration.

Another big problem, according to A1AM, is that C do not understand the CL’s overarching goals, and see only the immediate problem – the advertising project. A situation can arise where the ‘ask’ is not as creative as the C would like it to be, but is sufficient to achieve the CL’s aimed objective. This often leads to dissatisfaction among C, as their input is not considered, for various reasons (often financial and/or time-related), and they (C) are forced to continue along the CL’s chosen path, unhappily. This can be seen in their work and the way in which they engage with other parties. A1AM continues, stating that C often only think in terms of creative solutions and this often becomes difficult because other factors need to be considered, especially for the CL.

“You[‘ve also] got completely different personalities in each account [and project],” shares A1T. Different groups create different dynamics which can work well or badly. Agreeing, A1BD expands this concept, stating that there are times where, as an AM staffer, it is

necessary to *"do what you've got to do,"* despite conflict, in order to deliver a good service to CLs.

A1BD explains another concern: A1 is very large and is *"silo-ed"* into different departments in order to focus exclusively on specific types of work, and often these environments can be very challenging when there are projects that cut across media (and therefore, across departments too). The reason for this is that employees in a specific department are not trained in other departments. This often results in each department trying to dominate the project with their ideas rather than appreciate the work of others. *"I think it's a global problem,"* she claims.

4. The agency is regarded as a supplier by clients rather than a partner or custodian of client brands. They require the agency to complete tasks assigned to them, and do not want to give the agency attention.

More than half the respondents felt that this was often the situation in the agency industry, but not with A1. A1AM felt this to be true in A1, as well as the industry, and explains that such a situation comes down to relationships and managing them well.

However, A1AM has experienced situations where AM and C are put in the position of having to deliver a product that they believe is not right for the project when they know that, given more freedom and fewer directives, they could deliver a far better solution. However, they are not listened to (more so C), and sometimes not even given a chance to make their case. C are almost never consulted early enough in the process, with the result that they are required to deliver work they do not believe in.

A1T believes it could also be argued that the agency enters the project too late, i.e. once the brief has been conducted A1 is seen as an executing house, rather than a thinking one. This, she continues *"stops the C from being able to think"*. A1BD elaborates on this, finding that once a CL has selected a specific channel of communication they are *"indirectly instructing the agency that they know what they want"*. However, she continues, very often this channel or solution is wrong, and over the project duration this makes parties dissatisfied, but misgivings aside, the project needs to get done.

5. The client and agency, often, do not understand one another's intent and expectation. This occurs for both the project and wider relationship.

Although, this clearly occurred in the industry, however, it was positive to find that it was acknowledged not to occur in the agency. A1BD finds that it always comes down to respect and communication, *"what we want is: this is the business problem and that's the budget and that's the time"*. These three things are critical to any project. Once these are known, the project team then feels empowered to come up with the best possible solution. A1BD concludes, *"if everyone's included from the beginning, the chance that there will be support and respect is that much greater, relative to when people are not involved."*

6. There is a lack of communication between client and agency during early project stages, and as a good product can only be produced from good inputs, project quality is thus affected.

Most recipients felt this to be the situation in A1, and all felt that this was true for the industry. A1BD believes that there is a lack of communication, especially where CLs do not express key inputs to the agency upfront. This would significantly enhance A1's ability to deliver the best solution in the quickest time. Raising another dynamic, A1AM explains that if the participants enjoy working for the CL, then the communication will be better among the parties and A1 will work harder and better, but that most often this does not happen. Often, CLs only communicate information that is necessary, rather than sharing information openly. He then explains that CLs often seem to feel that by giving information they are parenting A1. They make this view clear through their actions. This could not be further from the truth as information guides the agency to good solutions.

7. Clients do not feel the agencies' contribution is value-for-money.

Half the participants felt this to be true for the industry, but not the agency. However, it was interesting to note that A1AM believed this to be true for A1. A1AM experiences that CLs are often dissatisfied, even if they (CLs) did not deliver project requirements when they were asked. Other times they change the scope of work, and want the same delivery time, as they feel they pay for this; however, there is only so much work A1 can do within a working day, especially when the project parameters shift.

Furthermore, expresses A1BD, smaller companies can provide a decent product at a cheaper rate than A1 can and in a quicker turnaround time, so CLs expect this from A1. However, A1 cannot work like that, it is too large. Although, the solutions that A1 does provide are arguably better and more efficient. Still, CLs do not appreciate this.

8. Client's lack of respect of the agency results in a diminished creative quality of solution, which affects the project and relationship.

More than half the respondents felt this to be true in A1. However, all felt this to be an industry standard. *"There are some accounts where you know you've just got good relationships set up... and there's mutual respect. Those accounts run easier than accounts where that's not happening,"* expresses A1BD, to which A1AM agrees. A1BD adds that respect and communication are fundamental to a strong and healthy relationship between CL and A1.

9. As a result of an unresolved breakdown during a project, the client-agency relationship is affected, and ultimately trust between both parties is diminished.

This caused some problems, as each recipient had a different answer, some interesting responses included: this does not really occur in the industry and definitely is not happening in A1 (which is experienced by A1BD); whereas, A1P found that it did occur in A1. A1T felt that it occurred only in the industry. A1AM felt this could be a collective term used for the results of the last 4 cited problems (i.e. 5 – 8).

Based on the statement finding that this factor is directly influenced by the last for cited problems. The results from the last 4 problems were aggregated.

4.5.2. AGENCY 2

1. The selection of creative solutions is based on organisational politics, individual status (i.e. the agency hierarchy), and aggressive campaigning of ideas. The selection should rather be based on the merits of the solutions themselves.

This was felt to occur more frequently in the industry, with half the respondents conceding to it. However, A2S was the only respondent to indicate that it occurs sometimes in the agency. A2S states that it's a case of *"whoever shouts the loudest [wins]."* Where the 'win' is to have their voice and/or idea is heard, and often selected. A1AM believes that this is where good facilitation can significantly help.

2. Creatives are only included on projects after brief and strategy completion, giving them little latitude to enhance the project at a conception level. Creatives would enjoy contributing with their input early to impact the project conceptually. They do not have the opportunity, and thus they often do not buy-in to project solutions.

Majority of participants felt this to be the situation in the industry. Interestingly, only A2C experiences this at A2, which could be a typical example of C experiencing this, while all others are oblivious to it. A2C shares that more involvement at these stages would give C a 'voice' at a far higher level than is currently available and would also offer the ability to adapt the project from a grassroots level which could enhance solutions early, before expending resources unnecessarily. A2AM supports this view, as does A2S, who believes that it would yield more utility for C to have the brief at hand and to be involved earlier.

3. Different departments within agencies are increasingly insular as a result of different disciplines/backgrounds. This creates an 'us and them' mentality within the agency, where separate departments have vastly different ideas regarding goals and measures of success. This has a negative effect on projects.

All participants expressed that this was the situation in the advertising industry. A2C was the only participant who felt that the cited problem did occur in A2 (the others all felt this was not the case in A2). This could allude to a situation where C are not feeling heard in A2. A2S has experienced situations where different project parties operate in such different ways that they are not understood at all by others. Parties can find themselves isolated if they are unwilling to share their vision with others. This is magnified significantly if it involves a frustrated situation.

4. The agency is regarded as a supplier by clients rather than a partner or custodian of client brands. They require the agency to complete tasks assigned to them, and do not want to give the agency attention.

All respondents agreed and felt that this is the situation within the industry, but not within A2. A2AM feels very strongly in favour of the belief that one creates one's own situations, in that it is necessary, as far as possible, to maintain a good relationship with CLs. This leads to good communication lines which develop trust, enabling A2 to become more than a service provider.

5. The client and agency, often, do not understand one another's intent and expectation. This occurs for both the project and wider relationship.

More than half the respondents felt this to be the case in A2, and all felt it occurred in the industry. A2AM feels that it is implicit, as the agency, to keep lines of communication open as far as possible. This guides the CL toward a formula where keeping lines of

communication fresh and continuous, rather than intermittent, is the best accepted method. A drop in the communication frequency results in a drop of reinforcement, which often results in misunderstanding.

6. There is a lack of communication between client and agency during early project stages, and as a good product can only be produced from good inputs, project quality is thus affected.

More than half the respondents felt this to be the case in A2, where all felt it occurred in the industry. A2AM believes that this is dependent on the nature of the relationship, i.e. the better the relationship, the more the trust. Where there is trust, there is a sense of openness, which allows parties (especially between CL and AM) to be *"able to ask stupid questions"*. This gives a sense of honesty, but moreover, all the bases are better covered than they would be in a situation where egos and fear get in the way of collaborative efforts.

7. Clients do not feel the agencies' contribution is value-for-money.

The responses from A2 found only A2S believing this occurred in A2, whereas the rest of recipients believed that it only occurred in the industry. A2MD expresses that the agency does not position itself as a cheap solution, it positions itself as a good problem solver, which has this benefit. A2MD does believe, however, that CLs would complain that A2 is economically expensive even if it were cheap.

Furthermore, according to A2AM, there are always going to be dissatisfaction and problems, in one shape or another, that will present themselves. What is important is how the agency deals with them. This is where value comes in, whether it is acknowledged or not.

8. Client's lack of respect of the agency results in a diminished creative quality of solution, which affects the project and relationship.

More than half the respondents felt this to be true in A2. However, all felt this to be an industry standard. *"I think the big thing is the CL and agency relationship, if you've got a solid relationship all those other things can be lessened to a large extent,"* accredits A2AM. Respect is only a part of this. If there is a solid relationship, however, then all the creative work most often falls into place, due to an openness where questions and problems can be addressed among party members.

9. As a result of an unresolved breakdown during a project, the client-agency relationship is affected, and ultimately trust between both parties is diminished.

The responses from A2 found only A2S believing this occurred in A2, whereas the rest of recipients believed that it only occurred in the industry. A2AM believes that trust, respect and relationships are all intertwined, and if these are secured then most other problems will be significantly diminished.

4.6. A VM BRIEF SOLUTION

The following sections review how VM could be conducted and includes participant sentiment. Presented thereafter are some concerns posed by the participants regarding each case study.

Through collaboration and analysis, a VM process was established. It is practically the generic VM process.

The CL sends the incoming brief to the agency during the pre-workshop phase. AM collects all the necessary documentation and preparatory work for the workshop. This is then disseminated to the Value Team, i.e. all the necessary parties, including the CL. The meeting would then occur a few days later, allowing the participants some thinking time.

A VM brief design workshop would occur. This structured meeting would replace all other formal brief meetings between CL and AM and between AM and the agency. The structure of the workshop would need to be customised to each agency environment (i.e. to each company), and possibly adapted for each job. A considered solution would be the running of the VM brief design workshop in two sections. Part one would run until the Functional Analysis point or until the Creative point, which would signify the beginning of part two, where a solution or solutions would be presented, by the Value Team, to the agency's CL's superiors.

The following sections expresses each agency's specialised VM process and the study participants' impressions. The illustrations, Fig. 4.3 and 4.4, respectively, depict the incorporation of VM into A1's and A2's pre-production processes. Beyond the VM workshop, which brings a VM aspect into the process, the rest of the agency pre-production process is the same.

4.6.1. AGENCY 1

The following sections pertain to A1.

4.6.1.1. The Process and Benefits

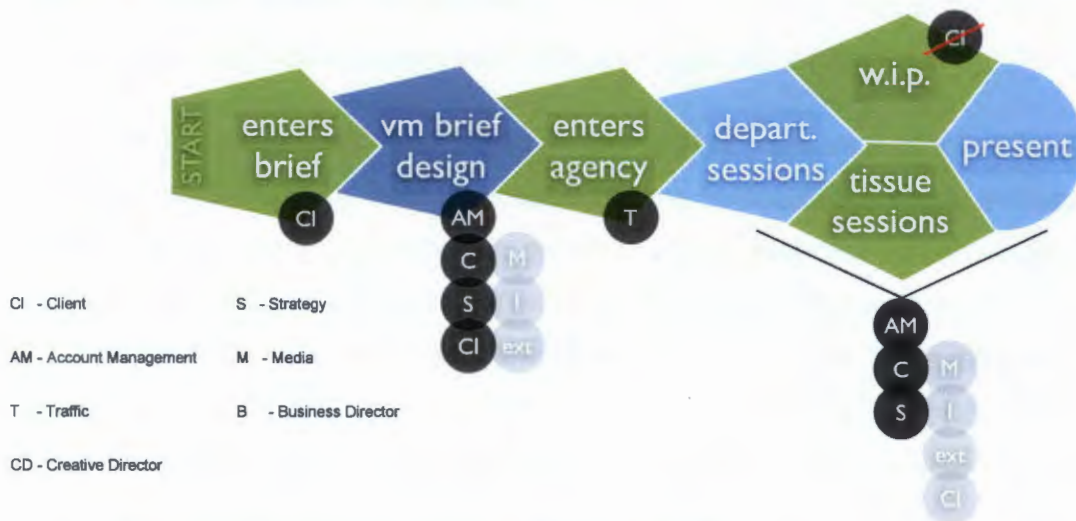


Fig. 4.3: Pre-production process of Agency 1 adapted using VM

The VM brief workshop would replace the brief re-write by the AM, the involvement of other project participants, the brief review and the kick-start meeting, thus combining all the work done in these other stages into one collaborative effort and event.

A1AM states, *"I think it is possible. So, [we would] have all the necessary parties involved upfront!"* adding that a VM process would be really valuable and the utility derived from it would be great. It was assessed that, beyond the formality and the CL being actively involved with the agency, the events, for the most part, already occur (established by A1T). Beyond the initial meeting (where a meeting like the kick-start meeting would open the project), the rest of the process is identical. Thus, it would simply be formalising activities within the process.

A1T feels that *"it would have to be specific to bigger jobs."* If a project is large enough to warrant significant strategy, work and money, CLs will want to get it right. Being involved can minimise risk and uncertainty, so they should be interested in this. A1AM agrees that it would not work for small jobs, and that involving CLs in the larger jobs makes sense so they should go for this. In agreement, A1P adds that *"it could [potentially] save time, money and add more direction [to these jobs]"*.

A1T points out that by replacing both the individual AM brief-writing event and the kick-start meeting it would also radically speed up the process, especially as the brief ordinarily 'floats' around the agency for weeks before it enters into the studio. By involving all the necessary participants upfront, their active involvement would enhance the brief quality, progress speed and individual engagement with all parties, especially CL.

Furthermore, all the participants find that it would radically enhance proposed solutions. A1BD believes that C would be able to assist in solving business problems, as they would be involved from the outset, not using the current 'broken telephone'-type system, where the vision is passed through different people, and eventually winds up at the C. A1AM and A1P both express favour with the clarity and direction of the VM process, believing that it allows for more effective brainstorming. A1T expresses another angle of benefit, in that more time is spent on doing the work, rather than on *"loose areas or waiting for answers"* and the like. She believes that this will give C more time to be good at what they do and will encourage them to buy into solutions, rather than putting them in a position of just performing tasks while potentially harbouring misgivings.

A1AM then describes the project document and item package, which AM would put together before the workshop. A1AM shares that putting these packs together would neither be too much work nor time. A1AM believes that all participants would have to read the content before the meeting, because too much content would be present for them to merely 'wing it', further, this might even enhance C's meeting performance, as, if all other participants had read the package, it is likely they (C) would too, in order to contribute proactively.

A1AM is of the opinion that, once C have read the package, they will be able to make a useful contribution, which should excite them more about the work, as it would have been collaborative, rather than linear (i.e. being passed from one party to the next). In addition, it could possibly also cut down the unnecessary distribution of brief information. This often over-communicates concepts to people, causing them to lose interest and pay less attention.

A1T hypothesises:

"If we could allocate a team in that planning session (i.e. pre-workshop phase) and then put the team into the meeting 2-3 days later (i.e. the beginning of the workshop phase), even though they are not ready to start working on [the project], that would work."

A1T then further expands on CL involvement, stating that it would be very empowering. She rationalises this, expressing that by CL's being more directly involved and understanding how and why certain decisions are made, it would give them significant creative licence. Two elements are key for this to work, ensuring that the process is as streamlined as possible: agency and CL training; and impeccable workshop preparation by the AM, ensuring that every piece of information and tool is at hand and that the environment is conducive to open communication.

A1T thinks that it would be interesting to see how all the differing parties communicate with one another in a controlled, facilitated environment. This would set the standard for the project, which would allow all parties a better opportunity to be heard, objectively. Another great advantage, A1AM believes, is that the VM process would take the pressure of co-ordination off AM (during the VM brief design meeting). This would increase their ability to actively assist in problem-solving, rather than just mediating between varied positions in an appeasing manner. It also takes the AM out of the *"baby-sitting"* position, with regards to both CL and project team, and allows them to add value to projects. Furthermore, it also reduces the risk placed on AM of not getting the brief 100% correct. Collaborative work buffers this risk.

A1AM continues, that AM will remain the CL representative and handler. They (AM) organise the information and workshop, but the facilitator controls the workshop, in a way to realise the best solution. The facilitator is completely unmotivated by the final product, and, through their neutrality, will be able to direct thinking using an array of tools available in VM. A1T states that although the cost of a facilitator increases costs, the benefits radically outweigh these costs many times over. These sentiments are echoed by A1P, who states that the longer the project runs, the higher the cost-of-change. A1T continues:

"the lack of time creates a firefighting mentality, where resources are maxed [out], costing the company much more [and] quality can be compromised. This is due to bad planning management, which is no-one's fault, it's just the nature of the beast – and suddenly resources start becoming very expensive."

A1AM thinks about the opportunity, for a moment, then states:

"If this is done in an open, healthy and active manner, where all get involved to realise the solution, the final piece of work, naturally, becomes a collaborative piece. This means that

participants will most likely leave the meeting with buy-in of the solution, as they have really been heard and worked together."

If conducted upfront, all participants agreed that VM would radically enhance the departure point for creative solutions. A1AM feels that it would assist with the collation for a clear direction, based on an agreed upon strategy, which will result in creative solutions that satisfy both CL and C. A1T states that a VM workshop would be a great starting point for discussion to begin a project. This, she resolves, would take the emphasis away from email and put it back in the hands of individuals and relationships.

Impressed, A1P, states that A1's current *modus operandi* is in line with today's process and nature of the industry, internationally. If the agency could streamline the often problem-ridden process and prove its effectiveness in 'cutting-edge' operational tools that realise best solutions, it would be great publicity, and offer even better solutions.

4.6.1.2. Concerns about a VM Process

Three quarters of the study participants agreed that VM could be incorporated into the advertising briefing stage. A1AM expresses that it would need to get total buy-in from CLs and senior A1 management to succeed. Whereas A1T finds that it is possible *"yes and no,"* as it depends on the brief, CL and agency. More research would need to be conducted to prove VM's effectiveness in hard facts to get senior management buy-in.

The sentiments regarding the CL's involvement in the initiation of the project was mostly in favour of it. The only possible concern, according to A1T, is that CLs, due to their conservatism, might *"shut-down"* C's emergent ideas, which would be counterproductive for the project. However, this would be dependent on the ability of the facilitator.

A1AM finds that A1 does not operate in an ideal world, so, when an incoming brief enters the agency, and a necessary party is not available, for whatever reason, they have to keep moving. This is not an ideal situation for a VM application. A1T adds that, as there are other jobs waiting to enter the agency, stopping the agency to ensure all parties are available is improbable.

A1AM returns to the question regarding the agency's ability to acquire CL active participation for the workshop, given that *"our briefs range from a one line email to a [very] detailed document"*. A1P, *"I think getting the CL to meetings will be a problem, for example if they are in JHB [it will be a logistical nightmare]"*.

A1AM's next point of concern is around the VM process, as it would need to be designed in such a way that it can be shown to save time rather than spend more, because at the moment it can present a time issue – without the workshop, there is no beginning of the project, but often people are not available. A1T agrees and expands that it would need to be able to show how costs, over the long term and whole project, are reduced and solutions enhanced.

A1T believes:

"It also depends on the size of the agency, smaller agencies would be more inclined to do this, but, they don't have the budget. However, I suspect they involve their CLs a lot in their work. [Also, due] to their size, people are taking on multiple roles which means [getting full participation is easier]."

Another concern involves the facilitator, and whether the task of co-ordinating all parties was too large in terms of matching the different personalities and managing the best outcome. A1AM feels that *"there's a great possibility for this to backfire"*, and that the agency is too intricate and large for a simple introduction of VM. Moreover, the possible solutions could be too numerous – this is too much work.

Ultimately, A1 participants are in two minds about the suitability of VM for their agency. A1AM expresses that it would *"add value in an ideal world – unfortunately, I think we are too large to implement successfully. [There is] not enough time/resources"*. A1T stated, *"I am not sure if it is totally necessary, and I wonder if the CL would hold back on certain things..."* but that it could work beautifully and might prove to be crucial to briefings:

"if [the] hiccups can be worked around, then I think it's a great idea. I think it would be hugely beneficial in terms of getting all the key people into a room to solve the brief, however, this is not far off from our kick-start process and I wonder if CLs will be willing to pay for this additional cost."

4.6.2. AGENCY 2

The following sections pertain to A2.

4.6.2.1. The Process and Benefits

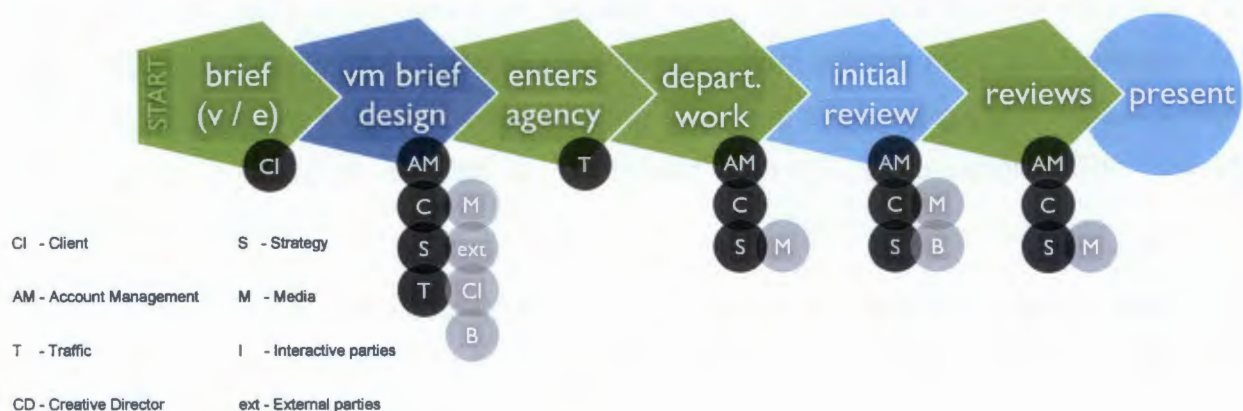


Fig. 4.4: Pre-production process of Agency 2 adapted using VM

The VM brief workshop would replace the brief rewrite and the brief session, combining all the work done in these stages into one collaborative event. After which the brief would formally enter A2. The study participants like the idea of using VM during the briefing stage. Most vote in favour of it, and agreed that it would most likely enhance the departure point for creative solutions. A2C feels that a VM workshop would help develop the brief into a well-thought through body of work, with relevant information to assist the creative process.

A2S finds the concept of giving everyone the input information and research as a package of documents and any relevant items, a very good idea. It would give all parties the opportunity to understand, from the emergent stages, what the AM ordinarily has to shoulder alone. Sharing this information and getting their insight early allows for more informed and collaborative solutions, he feels.

Furthermore, A2S believes a workshop facilitator to be a good idea, as it gives differing people an equal opportunity to make statements in a controlled environment, complete with a monitor who ensures that the workshop moves in a necessary direction to realise required solutions. A2AM supports this view.

A1MD relates that, at reviews, where project departments argue, the ideas that 'survive' are selected. This is based on three factors: (1) the functional necessity of the solution, (2) a particular proponent's ability to argue, and (3) power relations. Sometimes attention is garnered by presenting an idea in a novel way. She continues, "[it is] for this reason,

sometimes, [that] the best solutions are not chosen [or] presented to CL". Thus, if a facilitated VM workshop is utilised then a more equitable and all-round better selection is likely to occur more often.

A2AM clarifies that the CL would be involved during the VM briefing workshop and that their input would be part of that workshop, making them a team member. Moreover, AM would not be the sole point of contact with the CL during the briefing stage, where a more collaborative conceptual solution is conducted with CL participation. *"This sounds fantastic,"* she remarks.

A2S believes that by breaking down the job through a functional analysis and really understanding the components of the project may help tremendously. After this, doing the creative thinking makes sense.

A2C feels that it would be necessary to break up the workshop process into smaller, more manageable chunks. It would also help significantly, he adds, in terms of dividing energies among different tasks and allowing all some 'thinking space' and *"inspiration"*. Thus, on reconvening, some creative and interesting solutions would be established. He presents the concept of not wanting to be pressured to think and perform creatively 'on the fly', which would not work for C.

A2S adds to this point, explaining that the agency experiences inefficiencies, and A2 likely is not the only agency to experience this. He concedes that reworks occur, pandering to CLs' mis- or lack of communication, and when CLs take no responsibility for the work or are too controlling. It would be a fine opportunity to get them actively involved, if only momentarily, during the early stages.

It is acknowledged that a VM brief workshop would be more viable for larger projects. A2C indicates, *"Ok, I think it's possible but [only viable] for big campaigns"*, which was echoed by the rest of the participants. A2AM adds to this, stating that it is not possible for day to day business activity, as there is far too much work necessitated by each workshop and it would be impossible to formulate a workshop for each little job that is done. She continues, *"we work so quickly on a day to day basis, where I'm writing 5, 10, 20 briefs a day, so you can't have that process each time – it's impossible"*. A2AM concedes that maybe big agencies can deliver this task on each job, but with an agency of A2's size and resources, it would be impossible. A2S states that, moreover, it cannot be cost effective if done for every small project, in terms of the facilitator cost, the time available to the

agency in a normal day and the work that needs to get done. It would need to be targeted to the big jobs, where there is lots of money available.

A1AM expresses more interest in C getting information and being involved more directly, rather than via a chained route. A2C, on the receiving end of this statement, agrees and comments that solutions would likely be enhanced, which is important to him.

A2AM concludes, *"I think there is potential in [this for] the big stuff (projects) because [this] is a good place for agency and CL to start talking, from the start, [and] from the same page"*. A2S extends this, stating that *"[it's a] great way to refine the brief to something that [the CL actually] wants"*.

4.6.2.2. Concerns about a VM Process

A2F expresses that, if a large amount of energy is to be exerted on a VM workshop, then A2 will need to be able to recoup those input costs financially, which means the job will need to be significant or else there is no point. One has to appreciate that it will take much energy and time, A2S rationalises, and maybe too many resources.

A2C is hesitant of making a broad sweeping acceptance of a VM process, stating, *"I've never experienced anything like this before. So, I'm not sure"*. His further concern is the amount of work necessary for the input required during a VM brief design workshop. Another concern of his was the duration of the meeting, which, when seen as part of an eight hour day, can be considered extensive.

Furthermore, under the current structure, A2 participants are completely mixed about CL involvement during the brief stage. Some are wholly in favour, others are completely against it. Their concerns are based on CL's holding the power and forcing their solution rather than allowing a natural collaboration.

4.7. SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings of the two case studies. The engagement of each agency was common, however, in each situation the findings' results were unique to that agency. This resulted in some findings being common, while others were different.

The case studies showed the current pre-production processes for both a larger and smaller agency. This was a common process followed by both agencies. After which, the effectiveness of each, where both benefits and drawbacks were presented and assessed. Based on the findings of the prior two sections as well as some conceptual thinking, the participants in each case constructed some thoughts on enhancing the current briefing process.

Then the impact of some problem areas, as identified by theory, were assessed. These problem areas were discussed within the context of each agency and the participants' views of these within the industry.

The last section of work, theoretically evaluated the utility of VM in the agency environment. This was done by re-designing the pre-production process to accommodate a VM workshop. Furthermore, the participants thoughts and concerns were presented.

The following chapter discusses the key findings with reference to the findings of other authors.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter is a discussion of the findings presented in Chapter 4. A critical comparison has been applied to assess the findings of this study, relative to the findings of others. This was done using the tabulation summary of the findings, found in the previous chapter, and the literature, found in Chapter 2. Furthermore, the opinion of the researcher has, too, been applied, where valid.

As with the format of the previous chapter, this chapter will follow the heading structure of the research objectives, in order to continue gaining clarity of the findings with reference to the key questions of this research report.

5.2. THE CURRENT BRIEFING PROCESS

The agencies have striking commonalities, with regards to their respective processes (the graphics and explanation thereof can be found in Section 4.2). Each agency's process is regarded, by the participants, as common across the industry. It has been developed over time and deals, relatively well, with high-volume production. The structure is supported by Hill and Johnson's (2004) APDCR process, as the respective processes are strongly correlated with it. However, Section 2.3 suggests that, although it has been developed over time, it might not currently be the best process due to shifts in the industry.

Some noteworthy points, with reference to the current briefing process, were identified. Refer to Table 5.1 for a summary of Section 4.2's findings. The identified points are discussed below.

Both agencies have a similar situation, where either a Business Director or Account Management source a job, or the work is requested of the agency by the client. The incoming brief is then presented to the agency – if not already earlier than this, where Account Management is assigned to the project. Account Management then rewrites the brief, to an agency required standard.

It is interesting to note that, in Agency 1, brief templates are only sent to the client, and only where necessary. However, with Agency 2, brief templates are used within the agency (by Account Management) as far as possible to input information from client. This makes the brief drafting more mechanical, by 'going through the motions' of writing a brief, rather

than recreating it from scratch each time. A brief that is conducted using a template is in accordance with the *Institute of Communication Agencies* recommendation (*The Client Brief: a best practice guide to briefing communications agencies*, 2006). However, using a template has associated advantages and disadvantages, as it has the propensity to bore Account Management and result in mundane briefs, which Gladman and Melsom (2005) warn can negatively affect a project. Moreover, if brief-writers follow a template they can also run the risk of automatically matching what needs to be included in the brief template, rather than thinking laterally, which can result in missed opportunities. The advantage, though, is that the template makes the act of creating a brief a simpler task which can be completed in a shorter amount of time.

The next differing factor between Agency 1 and Agency 2 involves brief efficacy. Agency 1 places a strong emphasis on the correctness of briefs entering the agency. Agency 2, on the other hand, feels that the brief, at the beginning of the process (i.e. the point where agency briefs enter the agency), is the general vision rather than the specific goal. As Kelly, *et al.* (2003) argue, the brief gives the performance specifications, scope and clarity. A reasonable conclusion could be that, if the brief is not set, the goal is not defined, and the agency is thus doing unnecessary work as the goal is likely to shift. Both methods have disadvantages: Agency 1's method places significant pressure early in the process, and often, sufficient information is not present or available at that time, which can significantly impact the project; and Agency 2's method can result in wasted resources and time.

The brief that enters the agency via Account Management, in both Agency 1 and Agency 2, is reviewed by Traffic (or by both Traffic and the Creative Director). Although such a linear process has the propensity to consume time it is, however, regarded as critical, within the agencies, to reconcile the brief, assuring correctness in order to plan. This activity ensures the efficacy of the brief, which is arguably responsible business practice.

In both agencies, the purpose of the post-brief meeting (i.e. kick-start meeting in Agency 1; and brief session with Agency 2) is common. Both also identify that a welcoming environment (agency-wide) that is also creativity-friendly is critical. Elliot (2006) concurs, stating that a forum with such a nature is pertinent to the success of the project. Although, these sessions offer a creative environment, it would be interesting to establish a more formal structure for such meetings, as the participants alluded to a difficulty in controlling the meeting, where senior staffers would take control of the meeting, forcefully. Thus, it

could be argued that there is a lack of stability in such meetings, and therefore possible, by using a more structured, yet flexible, method (e.g. VM), to derive more utility from such meetings (Koga, 2000).

Once the different departments begin work on the project, both sets of study participants expressed that department meetings were the best forum to 'touch base'. These kinds of meetings keep communication current, and ongoing communication is associated with encouraging drive and project clarity within the project team.

Later in the pre-production process, work in progress meetings occur, and the utility of such meetings (i.e. Agency 1 – work in progress/tissue session; Agency 2 – reviews), in both agencies, is common. In Agency 1, work in progress meetings are an internal agency event, whereas tissue sessions allow the presence of the client. The latter is also in accordance with 'stage 8' of the APDCR process (Hill and Johnson, 2004). Whereas Agency 2, ordinarily does not invite clients, unless clients could add value and/or requested to be present. This sense of separation between client and agency seems to alienate client from agency, and creates distance (Triki *et al.*, 2007). This can be associated with a deficient relationship, as activities seem to occur behind 'closed doors'.

The aim of the meeting is to share work that has been done, assuring that all efforts are aimed toward a common endeavour. An important activity is the open critique of other parties' work. This is the last point where work can be changed before the client presentation. Thus, the meeting showcases each party's departmental work, to assure integration, completion, and correctness of work, prior to client delivery. This internal risk-mitigation measure has obvious significant advantages, and, thus, arguably makes good business sense.

Differing significantly, Agency 2's experience is that briefs are expected to change at this point (i.e. in review meetings), and therefore, work will need to be changed. Although this likely produces better solutions, changing the scope of work carries the inherent penalty of a relatively significant waste of resources and time.

More commonalities between Agency 1 and Agency 2 lie within the control format of meetings. Ordinarily, it is controlled by Account Management, and, where necessary, technical managers (representing different departments) may steer the meeting towards functional departmental concerns. By having one guiding party, meetings can move in a

directed manner, however, their actions are subjective as they have a vested interest within the meeting, which has some disadvantages (Leeuw, 2001).

All ideas worthy of client's knowledge are then taken to them for their potential buy-in by Account Management, and both agencies rely on their Account Management to present these ideas in an effective and correct manner. Based on the subjective nature of this activity, there are likely associated concerns about its propensity not to work as well as it could have, had the client either: (1) heard it from the 'idea-owner' directly, or; (2) been involved during the idea's conception.

Finally, the client presentations of both agencies are similar. They present the work visually, and the work is in line with the final brief (or updates to the brief that have been mutually agreed upon). By involving a senior team member, the presentation gives legitimisation to the work done, and more so, the senior would be able to perform the job convincingly, which will likely, make the client feel confident with the work done.

Agency 2, where possible, presents the work on a conceptual level, with an execution plan, where a timeline and resources are expressed to the client. This is arguably good business practice, as it shows a solution and a way to execute the project, and a strong PM philosophy (PMBOK, 2004).

Beyond delivering the conceptual work, as per brief, Agency 1 goes a step further: they also present a few other ideas conceived during their ideation process. These ideas, although off-brief, have been worked on in order to show the client some alternate solutions. Sometimes clients embrace these solutions, however, it can be considered risky to focus on work that is not within the scope of work (as defined by the PMBOK (2004)) as it takes time and resources that will likely not be recouped. However, it does possibly have merit with regards to enhancing creative solutions.

Besides some subtle differences, both agencies follow a common process that also follows advertising theory. This is not indicative of the findings of Hackley (2001), which states that practitioners do not use theoretical advertising works. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that, while there are events that occur which hamper efficiency (as alluded to by the work of others), the process continues to work relatively efficiently, albeit in a pressured (in terms of resources and time) environment.

5.3. CURRENT PROCESS' EFFECTIVENESS

This section assesses the sentiments of the participants regarding the pre-production process. It reflects some internal grievances and also some praise for the process. The section is divided into three sub-sections. The first discusses the briefing process' effectiveness, which assesses the brief until it enters the agency. The next component then assesses the meeting effectiveness, with regards to the various meetings (until the client presentation meeting). The last sub-section, tackles some peripheral noteworthy issues, documents any extraneous points of the process or agencies that are worthy of mention.

Some noteworthy points, with reference to the current process' effectiveness, were identified. Refer to Table 5.2, 5.3, and 5.4, respectively, for a summary of each of Section 4.3's sub-section findings. The identified points are discussed below:

5.3.1. The Brief Process Effectiveness

It was expressed, by both agencies, that the quality of incoming briefs is low which is bad. Further, the conversion of the brief from basic data to the best information so as to facilitate a creative vision is perceived, by the client, to be an agency function, rather than the client's. Thus, the client does not design a plan for the brief creation. This lack of willingness to contribute to the project (by clients) also points to the findings of Kelly, *et al.* (2003) that clients are only interested in a project's success, (i.e. a solution that adds value to their core business), and believe little more energy should wilfully come from them during the project. It also alludes to the argument presented by Gladman and Melsom (2005), that clients do not feel the need to invest energy into suppliers (i.e. the agency). However, this also differs relative to the client 'involvement continuum' (as defined in Section 2.2.4.2) as expressed by Hill and Johnson (2004). The client-agency relationship is often a dialectic one. The more interest and need the agency has to explain their requirements to the client, the more likely the client will be interested in participating, however, the client then needs to be receptive to be involved.

In situations where the client presents bad briefs, both agencies have different coping mechanisms. In an endeavour to assist clients, Agency 1 tries their utmost to steer them (clients) toward good solutions, which is sometimes also done through templates (to guide the client). Agency 2, however, believes they understand their clients' needs, based on their strong relationships with their clients. This could be viewed as over-confidence, which has the propensity to backfire.

In situations where clients do not know what their needs are, both agencies feel they cope with this through Account Management experience and utilising the project team effectively, in order to grapple with the potential needs of the client. This is in accordance with Hill and Johnson's (2004) recommendation to include necessary parties within the agency to strengthen the brief. These extra resources could be introduced when the client briefs Account Management, or after, when Account Management drafts the brief, and according to Hill and Johnson (2004), this enhances brief quality early in the process, which Hunter and Kelly (2003) find increases value. Thus, there is an association with involving the agency (whether only the Account Management or the full agency complement) and enhancing value in the project.

Where Agency 1 is particular about creating a brief that is correct from the outset, Agency 2 believes that, through their experience, relationship and knowledge of their client, they deliver good briefs, and therefore, good solutions. Accordingly, Agency 2 is not pedantic about brief efficacy during early stages, as they rely on systemic updates (during the pre-production process) to deliver a best solution. The opinion of the researcher agrees with Agency 1's philosophy, which locks in the scope as early as possible, as recommended by PMBOK (2004). Further, it could also be argued that Agency 2 tries to fulfil project requirements on a moving scope which can waste resources and time.

The agency brief writing process is also common between agencies. Furthermore, it was found that there is no real standardised process to writing a brief, besides that information is documented, collated, arranged and presented, which is in line with Lange (2001). It was intriguing to establish that, for the most part, neither agency requires a client sign-off of the brief, which Sinclair (1997) highlights as the finalisation of the 'brief-stage', in order to move forward with the project. Thus, it can be argued that, with both agencies, the brief is never totally finalised, but they continue with the process regardless, delivering what is considered successful projects. As there is little validation that a defined scope, as set out by Account Management's brief, is actually what the client wants, this course of events could result in unnecessary work, which wastes resources and time. Therefore, not having the client involved with or agreeing to the brief does not make good business sense and is unnecessarily perilous.

Further, some direct risks of writing a brief without the client are common within both agencies and include subjectiveness, a lack of information, not understanding client needs fully and the necessity of rework. These can be simplified down to (1) a lack of

communication, and (2) misunderstanding, which is documented significantly by Lace (1998), Hill and Johnson (2004) and Elliot (2006). These authors specifically discussed communication deficiency as a fundamental problem within the briefing stage, as it decreases solution quality. Communication at this early stage is an advantage, as few resources and not much time has been consumed (Hill and Johnson, 2004). It is reasonable to conclude that failing to take this opportunity is short-sighted of both the client and agency.

The agencies felt that, to do their job effectively, Account Management requires a skill-set, and this requirement differed between the cases. Agency 1 also believed that their Account Management staff is not particularly well-trained, which Michell (2001) finds can result in an array of dissatisfaction, among other negative results. Thus, there is a connection between the individual Account Management personnel's perception of the world and their ability to deliver a good brief; further, as they are not trained well, Agency 1 cannot expect a constant standard of their Account Management. This is likely to complicate relationships and projects both internally and inter-organisationally, where expectations might not be met. This is arguably bad business practice, as it relies too heavily on individual Account Management input, rather than bringing all Account Management to a standard. Both agencies, however, felt that the ability of Account Management to draft a brief that is clear to other participants is critical, as it links to client's needs, as argued by Kelly, *et al.* (2003). It appears that there is too little formality and training attached to Account Management, where the position's functions seem largely based on 'luck' and a personal connection (between client and Account Management) rather than having an understanding of the client and the agency. With training, the client and any Account Management should be able to work together more constructively, as the standard would be common and transparent across the line.

Concerning the effects of limited time on the brief drafting process, the agencies were diametrically opposed. Agency 1 perceives that this situation decreases quality, whereas Agency 2 believes it increases quality. Agency 2 argues that its ability to deliver a good solution within a short space of time, as a rapidly moving organisation, is good – they felt confident in reacting to changes quickly. This was not the case with Agency 1, where their lack of ability to react quickly negatively affects them, most directly in regards to technological advances and increased competition, as presented by Arens and Schaefer

(2007) and Treffilletti (2007). It is likely that if Agency 1 does not adapt to the current trends in the market, they might find themselves facing further difficulty.

The perception of the agency brief quality, differs between the two agencies. However, fundamentally, if the brief is inputted ineffectively, it will have repercussions for the rest of the project, as the quality of inputs often dictates the value of the output (Triki, *et al.*, 2007). Both agencies were in agreement that bad briefing results in wasted time and resources. The consequences of which increase pressure within the agency to deliver a good solution with unnecessary obstacles en route.

The involvement of other agency members (not necessarily project participants), where required, during the agency brief creation, occurs within both agencies, but to different degrees. Both consulted team members, where necessary, a process that is highly recommended by Hill and Johnson (2004). Further, there are arguments in favour of collaborative work, in line with SAVE (2007), among others. Moorman *et al.* (1992), for instance, advocate touching base with other parties in order to ensure brief efficacy, which can possibly save time and resources in the future of the project's life, and help develop camaraderie within the agency, through communication.

One can conclude, from the above information, that there is some dissatisfaction with incoming briefs and the redrafting thereof. Thus, the process is not a perfect one and the events mentioned above can have negative effects on the project and the relationship between client and agency.

5.3.2. Meeting Effectiveness

The utility of the brief for Creatives differs between the agencies. In Agency 1, there is a lack of buy-in where spending less time on a project is an understandable reaction, given that Creatives are not consulted during the brief creation, as discussed by Hackley (2001). This lack of consideration for Creatives results in them (Creatives') giving their attention only when needed, and offering little more beyond that. Agency 2 found that Creatives are often disappointed with the brief after reading it, and that they would like to be involved earlier. These findings, although different, resolve to a common issue: the inter-departmental divide and a lack of respect and understanding, which falls in line with the findings of Hackley (2001) and Hill and Johnson (2004). A sense of mutual respect is an understandable prerequisite for project success, as it would facilitate a willingly realised and more honest synergy among parties, further bridging the inter-departmental divide and

allowing creativity to blossom (as true creativity is inter-disciplinary) (Robinson, 2006). Thus, it is likely that Creatives' buy-in to solutions will increase if Creatives have part ownership thereof; furthermore, they would likely deliver better work (and support) to the project.

There are different post-brief meeting problems in each agency. Hackley (2001), Hill and Johnson (2004) and Gladman and Melsom (2005) have found the problems associated in Agency 1 to be commonly experienced. There seems to be a lack of respect among participants, which directly effects projects. These problems are mitigated through further meetings, which consumes much time. Agency 2 finds that during meetings, some voices ring more loudly or clearly than other participants' (i.e. some participants enjoy a larger platform for expression than others). This inequitable status becomes less democratic than envisioned, which aligns with Hackley's (2001) findings. Agency 2 also finds that, at the time when the meeting occurs, there is still unknown information that is critical to Creatives doing their work. This lack of present information costs resources and time, unnecessarily.

Both cases found that Account Management needs to monitor Creatives or else it is likely that they will not produce what is required of them. This also puts unwarranted stress on Account Management (Hackley, 2001).

When scope changes occur, the effects are common to both agencies. Agency 1 found, further, that, even though changes occurred (from client), their clients still wanted the same delivery time, which Taylor (1994) also found to be a prevalent agency problem. Moreover, it was interesting that the significantly high values associated with scope changes were regarded as expected, by each agency. This could have a strong association with the initial lack of brief transparency and clarity.

In situations where the brief is not detailed, the negative effects experienced were common to both Agency 1 and Agency 2. However, both agencies seemed reluctant to allow clients to participate in the post-brief meeting.

One can assess, based on the above contribution, that the meetings, too, do not represent a perfect environment for conducting post-brief work. The very purpose of the post-brief meeting is to streamline activities into a cohesive whole, and although different between the cases, meetings do achieve much good. However, issues do arise within meetings that also waste resources and time to differing degrees. These issues create problems for the project and can affect inter-organisational relationships.

5.3.3. Peripheral Noteworthy Issues

On the topic of the industry changing in recent years, the agencies held different views. Agency 1 felt that the lines had blurred between marketing, advertising and client duties. This change is largely the result of technological developments: as the industry adapted, costs escalated to adjust for the changes of income streams; clients have also been able to do more in-house, in order to save costs and this often means that agencies are introduced to the project later (Treffilietti, 2007). Furthermore, different clients embrace different points on the 'involvement continuum', where some want to be included and others only want a final product. This is in line with Mills and Marguiles' (1980) definition of client patterns.

The current impetus of advertising was expressed differently by each of the agencies. Agency 1, delivers results in line with the time, cost and quality needs of the client, but little more ingenuity in their jobs. Agency 1 exhibits traits described in the work of Koga (2000), where ordinarily, the agency does not concern itself with function and aesthetics. This situation frustrates Creatives, who want to develop best solutions (i.e. both functional and aesthetically pleasing), but are hamstrung by the limitations indicated above. This kind of frustration is identified by Gladman and Melsom (2005) as 'creativity numbness'. Agency 2, finds that clients are very price-sensitive, which means that there is little client-loyalty. This price-sensitivity threatens income streams, thus making the current advertising format a risky business, as considered by Treffilietti (2007).

The level of the client-agency relationship, too, differs between the agencies. Agency 1 prefers to operate as a partner, where work is collaborative and open. However, many clients regard Agency 1 as a supplier, in line with Mills and Marguiles' (1980) pattern definition.

Based on the above findings, it can be seen that the industry has changed, and the agency environment is learning to accommodate this change. There is unnecessary wastage, emanating both from within the agency and from external sources, which might need to be looked at, for organisation sustainability reasons.

5.4. ENHANCING THE CURRENT BRIEF EXPERIENCE

Some statements were made, by the participants, that could be considered indicative of a need to enhance the current process, and other statements were made that validate the

need for and presence of certain activities. Most of the statements relate to the findings in the previous two sections.

Some noteworthy points, with reference to enhancing the current brief experience, were identified. Refer to Table 5.5 for a summary of Section 4.4's findings. The identified points are discussed below:

The duration of the pre-production process for Agency 1 is ordinarily six weeks, whereas for Agency 2 it is two. The common duration is between two and three weeks (Hill and Johnson, 2004). Agency 1 is not satisfied with their duration, and would like to speed it up, while maintaining quality. Agency 2 is proud of their turnaround, however, it is a difficult schedule to maintain.

The starting point inputs that contribute to a smooth brief process are common to both agencies. Agency 1 differs from Agency 2 in that they (Agency 1) believes both client and Agency 1 need to be continually trained with the latest adverts in order to be as effective as possible in their respective roles. Dumond (2000) echoes this concept of effective training as a means of delivering client value. Agency 1 also believes that Account Management does not challenge CLs as frequently as they should. This needs to be done in an environment that is conducive to the open presentation of ideas, which Triki *et al.* (2007) advocate, and which Agency 1 appears to lack, as the Agency 1 process discourages the open challenging of ideas. Agency 2 stated that, to deliver a good brief, research is necessary, but, in an agency of their size, it just not possible to spend much time on research, due to resource and time limitations. Gladman and Melsom (2005) find that research is necessary, but that advertising is about creativity, and not primarily about the back-end work. Thus, it stands to reason that Agency 2 should not be overly concerned about not having the resources for research.

In discussing the design of the brief, the agencies differed. In both cases, it is found that the brief needs to be standardised to incorporate the identified factors, thereby delivering similar quality each time.

The need for client-agency relationship strength was common to both agencies. The findings concur with Moorman *et al.* (1992), who find that increasing communication results in a better relationship. Logically then, a sense of openness encourages a willingness to communicate freely, which enhances the inter-organisational rapport.

Both agencies reported that they deliver good quality solutions, that is a collaborative effort and is realised within the allotted time and budget. However, wastage does occur within the current process, as expressed in the previous two sections, and so it is reasonable to argue that the solutions, while good within this ambit, could be better if the wasteful elements are mitigated.

The impact that the solutions have on the relationship are positively correlated (i.e. dissatisfaction affects the relationship), in both agencies. Dissatisfaction, itself, was, also, common to both cases. It was found to occur on both sides (i.e. agency and client), and ordinarily not to stem from the brief. This is not in accordance with Triki *et al.* (2007), who state that break-downs often stem from a faulty brief that is not dealt with upfront and continues to contaminate the project and, later, the relationship. Furthermore, conflict often arises from a lack of time and the agency's reluctance to challenge client's ideas. The last common cause was found to be the CL's perception that they do not receive value for money (from their agencies), which Taylor (1994) also found. Agency 2 couples this with inter-organisational miscommunication, which Elliot (2006) notes. Dissatisfaction needs to be monitored, according to Triki, *et al.* (2007), as long-term relationships between clients and service providers are only good if the will to repurchase, trust and quality of service are present. Thus, a significant endeavour to expunge dissatisfaction could be indicated here.

Reworks occurred in both cases, and sentiments on this issue were similar in both agencies. They further agreed, that it was never the fault of the brief, but concurred it was mostly due to scope creep and a lack of clarity among parties. Better teamwork between client and agency might resolve the scope-issue earlier in the process, saving resources and time (Elliot, 2006).

As is presented within this section, the respective agencies know what works within their environment, they also, however, recognise areas that need to be reconsidered. They seem to harbour the 'if it's not broken don't fix it' mentality. Both agencies also seem to regard the concept of overhauling the process as an 'impossible' task; thus, they continue to operate from within the existing flawed process.

5.5. PRESENCE OF THEORETICAL PROBLEMS

It has been noted in the previous three sections that many of the grievances within the agencies, pertaining to their process, are common to the identified theoretical problems as stated in Chapter 2. The follow section looks at participants' perception of these theoretical problems, within their respective agencies.

Below Fig. 5.1 graphically expresses the perceived occurrence of the theoretical problems within the agencies and industries. Some noteworthy points, with reference to the presence of theoretical problems, were identified. Refer to Table 5.6 for a summary of Section 4.5's findings. The identified points are discussed below:

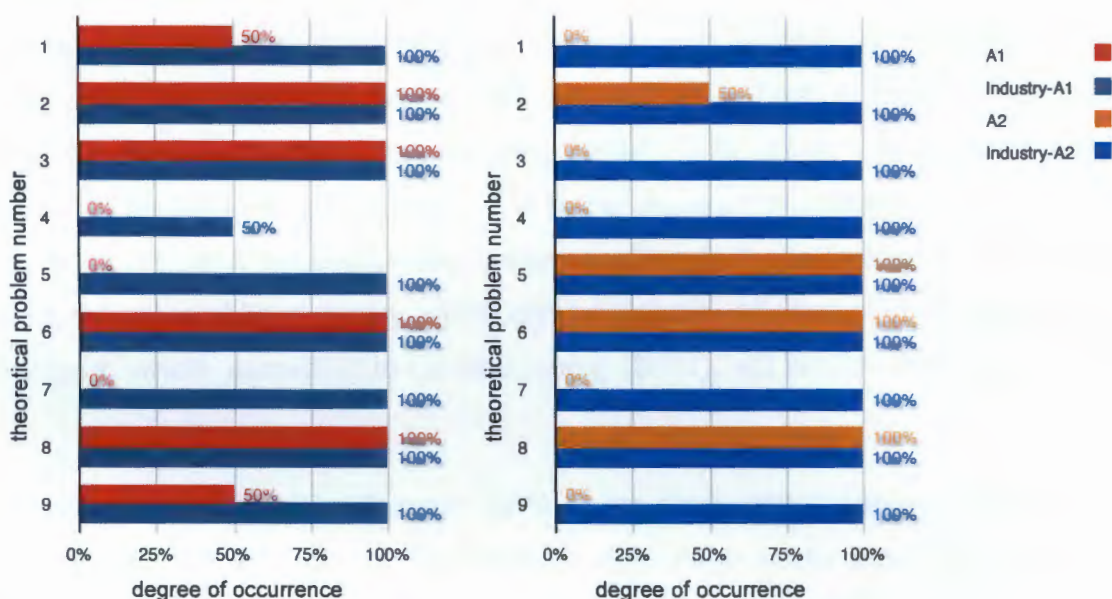


Fig. 5.1: Occurrence of identified problems within agencies and the industry

1. The selection of creative solutions is based on organisational politics, individual status (i.e. the agency hierarchy), and aggressive campaigning of ideas. The selection should rather be based on the merits of the solutions themselves.

Agency 1 expressed a 50% occurrence of this situation and Agency 2 felt that this occurs 0% of the time.

Both parties believed this to be fully representative of the industry. Thus, even though Problem 1 differs in both agencies, and is deemed not normal, it is likely that it does not affect all projects. The researcher is of the belief that this occurs more in Agency 2 than they would admit. This method of idea selection often allows those who are more articulate

or 'powerful within the agency' a tactical advantage over those who are not. It also affects projects and relationships, and likely leads to conflict. This inequitable dynamic is in line with Hackley's (2001) findings. Removing this dynamic is likely to yield better solutions, according to Triki, *et al.* (2007). Further, the supposition made by Agency 2, that facilitation would mitigate this dynamic, is supported by SAVE (2007).

2. Creatives are only included on projects after brief and strategy completion, giving them little latitude to enhance the project at a conception level. Creatives would enjoy contributing with their input early to impact the project conceptually. They do not have the opportunity, and thus they often do not buy-in to project solutions.

Agency 1 reported that this occurs 100% of the time. They also feel that the agency does not operate as a team, and that the quality of the outputs is dictated by the quality of the inputs. This situation negatively affects the project as it puts a stopper on open communication among parties. As Hackley (2001) discusses, participants' non-involvement can be severely problematic, and being required to operate within confines which they do not respect nor appreciate further compounds these problems. Triki, *et al.* (2007) notes the value of input quality, which can be radically affected by participants' buy-in to the project, which, according to Liu and Leung (2001), will add internal value to the project.

Agency 2 reported that Problem 2 occurs 50% of the time, and Creatives experience it strongly. They also felt that 'giving' Creatives a voice early would empower them and enhance solutions. This will enhance the project from a grass roots level. This is supported by Hackley (2001) who states that not allowing Creatives an opinion will lead to further conflict. Robinson (2006) adds that collaborating enhances creativity, through multi-disciplinary interaction.

Both agencies find this to represent the situation in the industry at large. The findings of the authors mentioned above, and the responses of the study participants, indicate collaboration and early involvement as a means to enhance working environments and creative solutions.

3. Different departments within agencies are increasingly insular as a result of different disciplines/backgrounds. This creates an 'us and them' mentality within the agency, where separate departments have vastly different ideas regarding goals and measures of success. This has a negative effect on projects.

Agency 1 found this to occur 100% of the time within their agency, with Account Management and client sitting in one 'camp', and Creatives and Strategy in another, a situation that echoes the findings of Hackley (2001). Furthermore, it was found that Creatives do not understand the client's overarching goals with regards to the project, which is not ideal, as, according to Kelly, *et al.* (2003), this understanding is fundamental to good solutions. Agency 1 cited different personality dynamics not working together effectively, with the insular nature of individual departments and the lack of understanding between departments as factors that severely impact on the project and internal relationships. Hackley (2001), argues that this is often as a result of different philosophies, and also recommends that project participants need to move as a team, and not as individuals.

Agency 2 does not think that this is a problem in their agency, however, they do feel that different parties operate independently, and do not understand one another. While they might feel this does not impact on them significantly, at the moment, it could, result in repercussions, given time, especially if the organisation continues to grow larger (becoming a more complex entity).

Both agencies believe Problem 3 to occur widely in the industry. As validated above, an all inclusive collaboration from the early stages of the project is indicated as a means to realise a best creative solution. This will enhance individuals' experience of one another and educate them with regards to other departments, empowering solutions with collective buy-in.

4. The agency is regarded as a supplier by clients rather than a partner or custodian of client brands. They require the agency to complete tasks assigned to them, and do not want to give the agency attention.

Agency 1 reported that they enjoy 0% occurrence of this problem. However, sometimes there are situations where clients only require Agency 1 to execute the project. Thus, the condition described by Gladman and Melsom (2005) regarding clients who do not feel the need to expend energy on their agency, does not seem to apply to Agency 1. Further, they do experience entering projects late, at which point they cannot affect them as much as they would like, which Treffiletti (2007) found to be the current industry trend.

Agency 1 also believes that Account Management and Creatives are not always heard by clients. This lack of consideration sometimes can strain the relationship, and might be

enhanced through further communication, as Moorman *et al.* (1992) recommend. Hill and Johnson (2004) explain that more communication leads to a better partnership which is geared toward better solutions. However, this is dependent on the involvement continuum (i.e. Pattern-1 to Pattern-2).

Agency 2 reported that they also did not experience this problem. They believe that, through good communication, trust develops, which results in good relationships. Triki *et al.* (2007) find this to be true, where quality of service dictates repurchase, and is an incumbent factor of long-term relationships.

Agency 1 felt that Problem 4 was indicative of the industry half of the time, and Agency 2 felt it to be fully representative of the industry. Ultimately, it appears incumbent on the service provider to deliver good quality, whether they are required to act as a service provider or a partner. However, the more closely the parties operate, the greater the level of communication, with the likely result of more trust and a better relationship, which, as rationalised in the above paragraphs, enhances solutions. Thus, it can be concluded that the presence of a good, strong and close working relationship is beneficial.

5. The client and agency, often, do not understand one another's intent and expectation.
This occurs for both the project and wider relationship.

Agency 1 reported 0% occurrence of Problem 5 in their agency, and felt that they earned respect and maintained strong levels of communication with clients. Gladman and Melsom (2005) state that respect and trust is critical for agencies, and that they will fight to retain it.

Agency 2 reported that they experience this problem 100% of the time, and they find that communication needs to be open and continuous in order to mitigate this problem. This is in line with Moorman *et al.*'s (1992) recommendations.

Both agencies found Problem 5 to be fully representative of the industry. It is reasonable to conclude that this problem comes back to communication and transparency, because if both entities (client and agency) work together toward a best solution it should be realised and established within a conducive environment, as Triki *et al.* (2007) state.

6. There is a lack of communication between client and agency during early project stages, and as a good product can only be produced from good inputs, project quality is thus affected.

Agency 1 reported a 100% occurrence of this problem within their agency. They experience a lack of strong inputs from clients, where the clients often give information sparingly, and not openly. Distance within the client-agency relationship will affect creativity and lead to further deficiencies in the relationship, over time (Triki *et al.*, 2007). Elliot's (2006) findings suggest that, if information is shared completely, initially, it would significantly enhance Agency 1's ability to deliver even better solutions, as teamwork between client and agency is necessary for success.

Agency 2 also reported a 100% occurrence of Problem 6 in the agency. They believe that a strong relationship is fundamental, as it leads to trust, which allows an open and honest interaction. In such an environment, they believe, the ground can be covered better, through collaborative efforts. This is in line with Triki *et al.*'s (2007) findings.

Both cases found this to be the situation in the industry, too. Again, early and continuous communication is fundamental to overall project success.

7. Clients do not feel the agencies' contribution is value-for-money.

Agency 1 found this occurred 0% of the time in their organisation. However, they did concede that clients are often dissatisfied. This could, however, be attributed to other factors, such as different levels of appreciation from the client and Agency 1, indicating a problematic culture clash (Gladman and Melsom, 2005).

Sometimes, this dissatisfaction can be also be ascribed to shortfalls on the clients' part. There are common situations where they do not give information willingly, or change the scope and expect the same delivery time – which adds difficulty. This is the reason Kelly *et al.* (2003) rate the importance of brief clarity to set the scope so highly, and why Baxter (2007) argues that wasted resources and unclear briefs can cause many problems.

Clients also expect Agency 1 to give them the kind of treatment they would receive from a micro-agency (where they would likely be the only client), and this is just not possible with an agency of Agency 1's size. This case-in-point mirrors the findings of the *Marketing and Advertising Survey* (1994), which states that dissatisfaction comes from the agencies' inability to understand the client's business and to engage with these clients in a manner that reflects this understanding.

Agency 2 also never experiences this situation, categorically stating that they have not positioned themselves as a cheap organisation.

Both agencies, again, found full occurrence of Problem 7 in the industry. Agency 2's belief that clients will always find the agency's solution expensive can be counterpointed by the credo 'the price of a good product is soon forgotten', i.e. the dissatisfaction associated with higher costs is 'cancelled out' by the satisfaction derived from good solutions. This ties in with the concept that clients purchase value (Kothari and Lackner, 2006).

8. Client's lack of respect of the agency results in a diminished creative quality of solution, which affects the project and relationship.

Agency 1 experiences this problem 100% of the time. They did, however, express that a good relationship and mutual respect is fundamental, and communication is critical in mitigating this phenomenon. This high occurrence could also be the result of a situation that Michell (2001) describes, where a client's critique of Creatives and the agency, if not done in a productive manner, can result in 'bruised egos', which can be counterproductive to the agency's workflow.

Agency 2 also experiences this problem 100% of the time within their agency, and they found the relationship to be important, too. They value a sense of openness, in order to speak one's mind as beneficial in mitigating this problem. This is in accordance with Triki *et al.* (2007), who find that trust and respect will be achieved through a supportive and welcome environment, which encourages creativity. Putting it another way, Hill and Johnson (2004) state that an intimidating work climate can lead to breakdowns. Agency 2 indicated that, in their experience, good client-agency relationships are also more forgiving of faults.

Agency 1 and Agency 2 both felt this problem occurs completely within the industry at large. It has been established that project participants want to be heard. It has also been mentioned that, if they are not respected or given an opportunity to present their case, they might do only what is required of them, rather than buying-in to the solution. This results in the work being done, but without a sense of ownership. In such an industry (in fact in any industry), the researcher argues, that this is likely not the best manner of soliciting best solutions.

9. As a result of an unresolved breakdown during a project, the client-agency relationship is affected, and ultimately trust between both parties is diminished.

Agency 1 experiences this 50% of the time. Agency 2, on the other hand, did not experience this.

Both agencies felt that this to be fully representative of the industry. This situation appears to be the final stage in the negative relationship process, with the reasoning that, if the client and agency have allowed their relationship to be neglected to the point where trust is not present, then, like in any relationship, breakdowns in communication, and eventually the dissolution of the relationship itself, are likely to ensue. However, if this is true, the negative relationship is a protracted one, given that Elliot (2006) shows some disappointing statistics, where the client-agency relationship exists, albeit an untrusting and stale one, and the frequency of dissatisfied relationships in the agency arena is a common experience.

Thus, based on the above findings, it can be assessed that, to varying degrees, the South African advertising industry does experience the theoretical problems identified in the literature.

5.6. A VM BRIEFING SOLUTION

This section shows how the VM process would occur, if applied to the advertising process. It discusses some of the findings that have already been presented, and shows how VM could mitigate some issues that were identified by the study participants.

This section discusses the topic of VM in the ambit of some of the benefits it would provide if applied to the process, and of some of the concerns the agencies have about its application. Refer to Table 5.7 and 5.8, respectively, for a summary of Section 4.6's findings. The identified points are discussed below:

5.6.1. The Process and Benefits

Both agencies expressed that applying VM to the agency process would be possible, but that it would only be practical to apply it to large and complex projects, where much involvement, meetings and a high level of communication among parties are necessary. VM offers good results with regards to customer satisfaction through quality results and strong communication, which is good for business sustainability (Dumond, 2000).

The participants expressed that it would not be viable to apply VM to small, quick projects as the VM workshop requires too much work; the VM workshop incorporates much

scheduling, participant presence and communication, which small projects simply do not require.

Although both agencies were impressed with the construct of VM, they were hesitant. It could be assessed that the participants were 'playing it safe', and responded to the information they had at hand.

The application of VM, in the context of the agency, was found to be a generic VM process, inserted in the initial stage of the agency process (as is evident in Section 4.6). The formalised brief meetings that each agency experiences, would be combined and occur upfront in the VM workshop. Embracing VM in the early stages is in accordance with Whitney (1988), who states that VM should be integral during the project design phase.

The active presence and participation of a value team (i.e. the project team and client) will strengthen the design, which will also confirm the scope, enhance collaboration and strengthen relationships (Kelly *et al.*, 2003).

The agencies expressed differing reactions to the affect VM will have on the current process. Agency 1 found that VM will add value to the process, and this general statement has been founded by many authors – Mitchell *et al.* (1994), Dumond (2000), Liu and Leung (2001). Kothari and Lackner (2006) express, strongly, that if the organisation understands the client's definitions of value, value can be driven forward, which enhances profit, thereby making good business sense. Agency 1 also found that VM would formalise events that already occur in the process. A formalisation is in line with Baskin and Pickton's (2003) enhancement of advertising through a more structured form, and the tools and techniques inherent within VM also offer opportunities to any project (Hamilton, 2002). Participants further expressed that both client and Agency 1 would need to be trained with reference to VM. This fits within Dumond's (2000) exposition with regards to organisations' needing to be trained in order to deliver client value. Agency 1 also felt that the workshop environment needs to be set up correctly, in order to deliver the benefits incumbent in VM (this is strongly advocated by Leeuw (2001), Baguley (2005) and SAVE (2007)).

Agency 2 found that VM would offer the opportunity for all project members to be present in one space (including the client), which is not currently available. This would in line with Gladman and Melsom's (2005) recommendation that early collaboration should be done to foster a best collective solution. VM offers this in order to tackle the project best (Hunter and Kelly, 2003). However, Agency 2 feels it would be necessary to break the workshop

down into parts (according to types of work inherent in the process) in order to best facilitate the agency – Leeuw (2001), Baguley (2005) and SAVE (2007) support this view, stipulating that the VM workshop needs be customised to the industry, as necessary.

These views are progressive, and validate the potential use of VM in the advertising arena. However, there are obviously issues which would need to be addressed if the agencies were serious about implementing VM into their workflow.

The agencies' reactions were similar when expressing their thoughts on the possible impact of the VM workshop on the agency. They both found that it would speed up the process. Koga (2000) supports this, describing VM workshops as more efficient than normal meetings, as they save time, and involve all parties upfront. Moreover, it is considered to enhance briefs and solutions, which ties in with Problem 8 (as discussed in Section 4.5). This can be associated with the pro-active engagement of the client and others, as a team, during early phases, which will further encourage client trust of their agency (Lace, 1998). Another benefit of the VM workshop is it encourages the brief to be a 'live', developing document which has multiple perspectives, which allows for interactive reflection (Kelly, *et al.*, 2003) This kind of brief emanates from the very process of seeking a true, cross-disciplinary solution (Robinson, 2006). These benefits are all possible due to the early communal engagement of the project by all members, where time and resources allow (Whitney, 1988; SAVE, 2007).

Where Agency 1 departs from Agency 2 is that they believe it will save both time and resources (Koga (2000) alludes to this) and deliver a stronger direction for the project. Direction, according to Hunter and Kelly (2003), is a natural result of an early, creative, collaborated vision, and escalates value. Agency 1 also believes that this kind of format will allow Creatives to solve business problems better, which ties in with Problem 4 (see Section 4.5). Agency 1 described their belief that, through a VM workshop, Creatives are likely to be more prepared for meetings (Creatives are typically not well prepared for kick-start meetings, in the agency's experience; but would respond better to the VM workshop, which would replace the kick-start). This can be as a result of the client's being present and involved early in the project, where their input is fundamental. This ties in with Problem 2 (see Section 4.5). Moreover, this will be done in an inviting and trusting environment which, if prepared effectively, will lead to a better advertising experienced (Elliot, 2006).

Based on the above participant input, there appears to be a positive association between the application of VM workshops and a positive impact on the agency process, i.e. utilising VM workshops could result in enhanced process efficiencies, early collaborative efforts and enhanced solutions.

The application of an information package to be distributed to all members by Account Management (termed as the 'Team Leader' by Kaufman, 2000) was considered to be a great concept by both agencies, as it would inform all parties equally, and fully, preparing them for the meeting, which they believe would be very useful. Agency 2 felt that it would share knowledge and insight early, which again comes back to the benefits of early full collaborative efforts (Hunter and Kelly, 2003).

It seems that, at the moment, within the agency, this (i.e. early collaboration) does not occur effectively, and the client is not included in this event. By pro-actively involving all parties, early, with a package designed to convey information fully, the VM workshop includes all parties in the briefing stage. Thus, rather than presenting participants with confines in which to think (an agency problem, as identified by Hackley, 2001), the participants themselves, take part in the defining of boundaries. This increased involvement, as stated before, will likely empower previously silenced project parties, through the sharing of information and increased involvement, which will likely result in better brief buy-in.

Further, it was found the VM would likely present similar opportunities to the respective agencies. The participants felt that the work (i.e. the brief) would be truly collaborative, by involving all parties early. Moreover, by involving client in a project, pro-actively, from the beginning, would help them (clients) to develop a better understanding of the agency and the process, which in turn would make them more of a collaborative team member, than an outsider (Lace, 1998). This ties in with Problems 3 and 5 (see Section 4.5) as relationships, both internal and between client and agency, are strengthened through communication and involvement, making the interaction clearer and more continuous, and enhancing understanding.

Since all parties would be involved in the project early on, the design of the work will be more fully realised, given that all parties would have had an opportunity to contribute to the solution and an opportunity to develop a rapport among members during the early stages. This forms a strong structure on which the project can build (Koga, 2000). This connects

with Problem 6 (see Section 4.5), again, in terms of increased, clear and necessary communication, that is continual from the burgeoning project stages. The VM Workshop is an opportunity for transparent communication to take place.

Both Agency 1 and Agency 2, believe that the VM workshop would enhance the departure point for creative solutions by empowering project team individuals and (thereby) enhancing value through internal commitment and drive, as supported by Dumond (2000). This ties back to Problem 7 (see Section 4.5.), as enhanced solutions would likely deliver a better return on investment, with regards to the advertising solution (i.e. better solutions would likely justify the cost). Added to which, better delivery of better work adds value to projects (Kothari and Lackner, 2006), which makes projects more efficient (Liu and Leung, 2001), this in turn reduces risk (Koga, 2000). This type of collaborative solution can strengthen the client's trust of the agency (Lace, 1998). Thus, this ties in with Problem 9 (see Section 4.5).

Agency 2 liked the idea of breaking down the project into the functional components (during the functional analysis), which they believed would result in better solutions (this is in line with SAVE, 2007).

The opportunities presented by VM, that are not currently present in the advertising process, present foreseeable advantages to the agencies. The application of VM would likely add value to the current process, which benefits the agencies. Thus, there is reason to believe that a positive relationship between the application of VM and enhancing the advertising pre-production process exists.

Both agencies felt that the effect of involving the client is empowering to both the client and the agency. For the former, inter-organisational collaboration would result in a shared vision, which would lead to increased value (this view is supported by Hunter and Kelly, 2003). For the latter, the agency will learn more about the client's business (Baskin and Pickton, 2003) as well as understand how the clients measure value (Lace, 1998). Both of the above reasons, support the application of VM in advertising.

The last discussion encompassed the agencies' sentiments about the facilitation that would occur within the workshop meetings. Both agencies delivered common views pertaining to the topic. They felt it was a good opportunity, that a facilitator would be able to control and guide the process effectively, that the standards would be set and that the path forward would be made clear. This is in line with the sentiments of SAVE (2007).

Furthermore, the agencies approved that the facilitator was unmotivated by the solution, and therefore could remain objective during the workshop (this is supported by Woodhead, 2000).

Agency 1 departed from Agency 2, stating that they expect the benefits of facilitation to outweigh the costs. This can possibly be measured in terms of the physical costs of the facilitation in a workshop, relative to the physical costs of running more meetings, or it could be measured in terms of the added-value inherent (as argued above) in workshop-enabled solutions relative to traditionally-reached solutions.

Agency 2 expressed that facilitation would likely mitigate situations where non-best solutions are selected (i.e. Problem 1 – see Section 5.5), as they would be able to control participants, use tools and techniques available to VM and guide the process as necessary (supported by Woodhead, 2000; Hamilton, 2002; Kelly *et al.*, 2003).

Based on the interest put forward regarding facilitation and theoretical support, it seems that facilitation would enhance advertising workshops, and, moreover, their results.

Reviewing the above information, it seems evident that the application of VM to the advertising industry can present opportunities where advantages, not present in the current process, would be experienced. This could potentially add value to projects through cost-reduction, early resource allocation, a value team (i.e. the project team and client) collaborated solution, inherently increasing all-round buy-in, and might even deliver better solutions.

5.6.2. Concerns about a VM Process

Both agencies had common concerns regarding the utility of VM within the agency. They both were not sure about the viability of VM at their respective organisations, as it is not a traditional agency process, and would represent diverting from the industry standard. This sort of decision, they felt, would need to come from top management. Triki *et al.* (2007) agrees, finding that it would need to be sanctioned from top management, in order to garner support. Both agencies also were not certain that VM would work in their agencies. Thus, both respective agencies felt that VM was likely not for them ¹⁰. Each agency also felt that the VM process would be very resource- and time intensive (although not in alignment with the work of Koga (2000)). It was rationalised that only large conceptual

¹⁰ It must be noted that no senior management made these statements. These are the views of agency employees who were study participants.

advertising projects should be considered good candidates for the VM-included process, as the usage of time and resources would likely add value (this would not be the case with smaller projects). The participants were uncertain about the application of VM within the advertising arena, which might have influenced their response.

The agencies offered differing sentiments with regard to the view of VM during the briefing stage. Agency 1 was not totally convinced that VM would overhaul the process and enhance it radically. Further, Agency 1 believed the effects of the process to be similar to that of the kick-start meeting. The latter statement could be contested on the basis that there are fundamental differences between a VM workshop, relative to the kick-start meeting (as has been presented throughout this chapter).

Agency 2 concluded that a VM brief workshop would require much energy, and as such, should only be considered for larger jobs. SAVE (2007), specifically, in the description of the workshop outline, which shows that VM does require significant input, appears to support the concerns presented by Agency 2, and their conclusion that VM is more suited for larger advertising projects.

The cases delivered different concerns regarding the perceived effectiveness of VM. Agency 1 felt that VM would first need to be accepted by the senior agency management and clients, which Triki *et al.* (2007) recommends. Senior agency management would also require application-based proof that VM would save time and resources within the agency environment – more research needs to be conducted beyond the findings of Koga (2000). Their next concern was that the task of the facilitator was too large, and that dealing with such different and strong personalities would be a very difficult activity. However, as Dumond (2000) expresses, value managers (facilitators) are well trained to deal with such situations. Further, if VM is used extensively in construction (Kelly, *et al.* 2003), in projects that are higher in cost and deal with many personalities within a hierarchy that is far more complex than advertising projects. Therefore, advertising projects should be no problem.

Agency 1 raised the concern that all members in the supposed value team are not always available to meet. These technical issues would need to be solved through the integrative design of VM with the agency's process, which is a more detailed problem to solve, if VM is to be considered for an agency. Furthermore, Agency 1 felt that clients are not likely to participate in the VM workshop; again, Triki *et al.* (2007) finds that VM needs to be

accepted by both senior management and clients, or else they will not take it seriously and therefore not involve themselves fully, which would affect the value of the process.

Agency 2 felt that they had not experienced VM before and were not prepared to make a confident statement on a construct they did not fully understand. Although, VM is applicable to almost all types of projects in all industries (Kelly *et al.*, 2004), evidence of its application within the advertising industry was not found by the researcher, thus only tentative conclusions, based on events within other industries, can be expressed. However, as projects follow the same principles, regardless of the industry (PMBOK, 2004), there can be some certainty associated to these statements.

Lastly, the views of both agencies, regarding client's presence during the briefing, as a concern, were similar. Furthermore, Agency 1 also felt that clients have the propensity, in their experience, to stifle ideas. The workshop would need to allow for open brainstorming (SAVE, 2007), but if the client does not like the ideas, they might create an environment that is not conducive to this, or alternatively, clients might not deliver information openly. The client would need to believe in the VM process, as withheld information would likely compromise the project (Triki *et al.*, 2007). However, it is arguable that, if the client plans to withhold information, they will do so regardless of the forum. The facilitator would need to deal with these situations, if and when they arise (Woodhead, 2000). Moreover, the workshop process can be customised to the needs of the project and the participants, with the direction of the facilitator, as stipulated by Koga (2000).

VM was a new concept to the study participants, thus they had many concerns, with regards to implementing it into the current agency process. As a result, it seemed that the participants were making 'safe' statements, and harboured normal concerns of a new idea. However, many of the concerns centred on detail-issues which, if VM were to be applied within the agency, would need to be resolved prior to its application. Some of the other concerns were resolvable with theory, but ultimately, it would be difficult to get their buy-in without running a VM trial, and such an event would require significant work with top management.

5.7. TABLES COMPARING THE AGENCIES

The findings of Chapter 4 have been presented in a summarised format and tabulated in this section. These tables represent the situation within each case and to highlight

commonalities and differences (shown in orange colour text) between the agencies' sentiments according to the research objectives headings.

Table 5.1. The current briefing process

	Finding	A1	A2	A1 vs. A2
1	Perspective of their pre-production process relative to the industry	• Standard across the industry	• Standard across the industry	• common
2	How busy is the organisation?	• Very – resources maximised	• Very – never turns work away	• common
3	Incoming brief into agency	• AM assigned to project • via AM – A1 to CL (vice versa) • AM (re)writes brief	• AM assigned to project • via AM – A2 to CL (vice versa) • AM (re)writes brief	• common
4	Use of brief templates	• Where CLs need it – given • Seldom within agency	• Use were possible	• different
5	Agency brief that enters the agency	• Emphasis on being right (i.e. if it not, this will be noted)	• Should be right, but most likely to be updated in brief session	• different
6	Assessment of brief for correctness (by others)	• T – who begins planning • T meets CD, sometimes AM	• T – who begin planning • T distributes brief for review	• common
7	Purpose of post-brief meeting (kick-start – A1; brief session – A2)	• Ordinarily complex jobs • Full A1 team participants • Discuss/debate brief concept • Participants represented/heard • Brief/project problems solved • Creativity-friendly environment • Collaborates project direction • Amendments update brief • Brief becomes final and best	• Ordinarily complex jobs • Full A2 team participants • Discuss/debate brief concept • Participants are heard/criticised • Brief/project problems solved • Creativity-friendly environment • Collaborates project direction • Amendments update brief • Brief becomes final and best	• common
8	Utility of department meetings	• Ensure pursuit of common goal	• Ensure pursuit of common goal	• common
9	Utility of work in progress meetings (work in progress/tissue sessions – A1; reviews – A2)	• CL may/may not be involved • Show work done to date • All working to a common goal • Openly critique other's work. • Ensure all aspects are covered	• CL not involved (or rarely) • Show work done to date • All working to a common goal • Openly critique other's work. • Ensure all aspects are covered • Concept changes can occur	• common
10	Controlling of all meetings	• Senior – AM or CD (normally) • Technical may steer at points	• Senior – AM or BD/S (normally) • Technical may steer at points	• common
11	Control of ideas that filter to CL	• AM takes worthy ideas to CL	• AM takes worthy ideas to CL	• common

	Finding	A1	A2	A1 vs. A2
12	CL presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenter AM/CD • Graphically present work • In accordance with brief/updates • Give off-brief alternative concepts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenter AM/C • Translate brief into a concept or concept and execution plan 	• common

Table 5.2. Current process' effectiveness – the brief process

	Finding	A1	A2	A1 vs. A2
1	Good quality of incoming briefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rare • CL lack time/energy to create a good brief – purpose of agency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rare • verbal / written (uncommon) • CL do not realise importance of planning as soon as possible 	• common
2	Assistance to CL from AM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempt to steer to a good brief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AM understands CL's need based on relationship 	• different
3	If CL does not know their needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience from AM • Utilise BD/S (not done often – time/resource limitations) • Create brief – best as possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience from AM • Utilise A2 team • Based on relationship and knowledge of CL 	• common
4	Agency brief writing process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Done by AM – without CL • No set process • Subjective – hopeful it is right • Info documented, collated, arranged and presented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Done by AM – without CL • No set process • Use templates – insert given, intuitive or researched info • Subjective – hopeful it is right • Info documented, collated, arranged and presented 	• common
5	Risks of writing a brief without CL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of further input information • Not understanding CL's needs • Redoing work is expensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to write subjectively • Not understanding CL's needs • Redoing work is expensive 	• common
6	AM discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-variant • Uses skills acquired over time to understand CL's needs, • Not necessarily well-trained • Others must understand brief 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AM should be able to steer CLs towards good choices • Others must understand brief 	• different
7	Effect of limited time to draft a brief (profit focus)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived decrease of quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived high quality 	• different
8	Quality of agency brief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not done well • In haste – wrong/little detail • Related to a lack of time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good • Must show CLs' needs 	• different
9	Result of an agency brief that is bad	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste of time/resources • CL info has to be chased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste of time/resources • CL info has to be chased 	• common

	Finding	A1	A2	A1 vs A2
10	Involvement with others at agency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult BD/S/team – if difficulty • Rarely happens (lack of time) • A1 should take better advantage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If involved in group, assist in brief • Team review pre-enter of agency • Check efficacy (can be wasteful) 	• different
11	CL sign-off of brief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No – due to lack of time • Yes – complex jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not normally • Yes – complex jobs 	• common

Table 5.3. Current process' effectiveness – meeting process

	Finding	A1	A2	A1 vs A2
1	Utility of agency brief for C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not read (especially bad ones) • Kick-start explains scope • Waste of time/resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often disappointed after reading • Like to be involved earlier – uncertain of ability to add value 	• different
2	Problems post-brief meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative confrontation possible • Sharing ideas can change scope • AM can get too prescriptive • AM have to monitor C (places unnecessary strain on AM) • Follow-up meetings help with this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C get brief soon before – too late • Sharing ideas can change scope • Some voices heard better/louder than others • AM have to monitor C • C want answers in meeting (not possible as it comes from CL) 	• different
3	Results of scope changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ±25% of briefs experience • Cause: CLs change their minds • Same delivery time expected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ±20% of briefs experience • Cause: CLs change their minds, better ideas or condition change • Regarded normal process 	• different
4	In negative situations, where brief's details are incomplete	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be AM personnel inability • CL not furnishing AM with detail • Unnecessary stress • Waste of time/resources • Project still begins 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often project details not available from CL • Unnecessary stress and waste of time/resources • Project still begins 	• common
5	CL involvement in post-brief meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mature CL – possibly • Junior CL – no 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No 	• common

Table 5.4. Current process' effectiveness – peripheral noteworthy issues

	Finding	A1	A2	A1 vs A2
1	Industry changes over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blurred lines between marketing, advertising and CL duties • Each tries to do as much as possible to save/make money • A1 involved later in the creative process – cost-cutting from CL • CLs have hidden agenda – complicating the process • Some CLs want to be more involved, others a final product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider gamut of CL kind • Engagement of CLs different than historically • Maybe a more researched/informed process could help in some circumstances 	• different
2	Current impetus of advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost-cutting/profit-maximising and less on creativity • Best solutions often not accepted, due to a lack of resources/time • Frustrates C 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often spots opportunities (CL) • CL price sensitive (no loyalty) 	• different
3	Degree of relationship (CL-agency)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefer to operate as a partner • Work collaboratively and openly • Many CLs regard A1 a supplier • Good C not work for 'bad' CLs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CLs not often involved during the pre-production process • CLs might stifle the creative process (often have immediate 'no-thinking attitude') 	• different

Table 5.5. Enhancing the current brief experience

	Finding	A1	A2	A1 vs A2
1	Duration from brief to presentation	• ± 6 weeks (too long)	± 2 weeks (adapted to suit CL)	• different
2	Starting-point inputs for a smooth process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuously train CL and A1 (make more effective) • Well-informed AM (critical) • Interrogate and actively direct CL (not only listen) • Ask good questions and understand CL need • Challenge CL – for best solution • Ability of AM to draft good brief • AM often does not challenge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-informed AM (critical) • Research problem for good brief (difficult in smaller company) • Interrogate and actively direct CL (not only listen) • Be honest and ask good questions – understand CL need • Challenge CL – for best solution 	• common
3	The brief design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written excitingly – inspire team • Often not done – time limited 	• Best brief – detailed but open	• different

	Finding	A1	A2	A1 vs A2
4	Strength of relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust and respect of A1/AM and CL • Ability of AM to be heard by CL – positive relationship • Stronger relationship = A1 is more comfortable to challenge CL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust and respect of A2/AM and CL • Ability of AM to be heard by CL – positive relationship • Stronger relationship = A2 is more comfortable to challenge CL 	• common
5	Solutions realised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality good • Collaborative and in time/budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality good • Collaborative and in time/budget 	• common
6	Solution's impact on relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive relationship • Change of scope – enhances project and positively affects relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive relationship • Dissatisfaction affect relationship • Once-off problems – fine, continuous issues not 	• common
7	Dissatisfaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs on both sides • Not normally stemming from brief • Conflict arises from time/ challenges from A1 • CL wants value – A1 provides it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurs on both sides • Not normally stemming from brief • Conflict arises from time/ challenges from A2 • CL wants value – A2 provides it • Results from miscommunication 	• common
8	Reworks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ±20% of all work • Costs time/resources – A1 and CL • Nature of the industry – subjective • Never fault of brief • Common cause – scope creep and lack of clarity among parties • Enhances solution – but expensive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ±20-40% of all work • Costs time/resources – A1 and CL • Nature of the industry – subjective • Never fault of brief • Common cause – scope creep and lack of clarity among parties 	• common

Table 5.6. Presence of theoretical problems

Problem 1		
The selection of creative solutions is based on organisational politics, individual status (i.e. the agency hierarchy), and aggressive campaigning of ideas. The selection should rather be based on the merits of the solution themselves.		
A1	50%	
Industry	100%	
A2	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parties who shout loudest 'win' • If facilitation was used it would likely benefit the process.
Industry	100%	
A1 vs A2	• different	

Problem 2

Creatives are only included on projects after brief and strategy completion, giving them little latitude to enhance the project at a conception level. Creatives would enjoy contributing with their input early to impact the project conceptually. They do not have the opportunity, and thus they often do not buy-in to project solutions.

A1	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A1-wide not only C • Agency does not work as a team • Lack of communication • Value of input dictates quality of output
Industry	100%	
A2	50%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C experienced this • Giving C a voice will empower them • C has the opportunity to change the project from a grassroots level and better solution
Industry	100%	
A1 vs A2	• different	

Problem 3

Different departments within agencies are increasingly insular as a result of different disciplines/backgrounds. This creates an 'us and them' mentality within the agency, where separate departments have vastly different ideas regarding goals and measures of success. This has a negative effect on projects.

A1	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AM+CL vs. C+S • C do not understand CL's over-arching goal – and act accordingly • Different personal dynamics not working together effectively • 'Department A' not understood by other departments
Industry	100%	
A2	0%	• Different parties operate in different ways and do not understand one another
Industry	100%	
A1 vs A2	• different	

Problem 4

The agency is regarded as a supplier by clients rather than a partner or custodian of client-brands. They require the agency to complete tasks assigned to them, and do not want to give the agency attention.

A1	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comes down to relationships • A1 enters projects too late • C can't affect project as much as they could have if entered earlier • AM and C not heard • Only required to execute work
Industry	50%	
A2	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong relationships – fundamental • Leads to good communication – develops trust • A2 becomes more a partner than a service provider

Industry	100%	
A1 vs A2	• common	
Problem 5		
The client and agency, often, do not understand one another's intent and expectation. This occurs for both the project and wider relationship.		
A1	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comes down to respect and communication • If A1 was involved earlier, they would be regarded more a partner
Industry	100%	
A2	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication needs to be open and continuous
Industry	100%	
A1 vs A2	• different	
Problem 6		
There is a lack of communication between client and agency during early project stages, and as a good product can only be produced from good inputs, project quality is thus affected.		
A1	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of strong input information from CL • Enhance A1 ability to deliver best solution • CL gives information sparingly not openly
Industry	100%	
A2	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationship strength – fundamental • Leads to trust • Trust allows for an openness and honesty • The ground can be covered better, allowing more collaboration with no egos
Industry	100%	
A1 vs A2	• common	
Problem 7		
Clients do not feel the agencies' contribution is value-for-money.		
A1	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CL often dissatisfied • CL do not give information willingly • Despite change/s of scope, CL expect same delivery time and cost • CL expect to receive the same treatment from A1 as from smaller companies
Industry	100%	
A2	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A2 not positioned cheap – rather a good problem solver • Economically expensive – CLs will always feel this • A2 deals with problems well but CLs do not regard this. They regard it A2's responsibility
Industry	100%	
A1 vs A2	• common	

Problem 8		
Client's lack of respect of the agency results in a diminished creative quality of solution, which affects the project and relationship.		
A1	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A good relationship with mutual respect is fundamental • Communication is also critical
Industry	100%	
A2	100%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CL-A2 relationship important • Better relationship more forgiving of faults • Needs to be a sense of openness to speak one's mind
Industry	100%	
A1 vs A2	• common	
Problem 9		
As a result of an unresolved breakdown during a project, the client-agency relationship is affected, and ultimately trust between both parties is diminished.		
A1	50%	
Industry	100%	
A2	0%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust, respect and relationship are critical • Other problems will be minimised
Industry	100%	
A1 vs A2	• different	

Table 5.7. A VM briefing solution – the process and benefits

	Finding	A1	A2	A1 vs A2
1	Is it possible	Yes Large projects	Yes Large projects	common
2	Application of VM process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generic VM process • Slight adaptation to current process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generic VM process • Slight adaptation to current process 	• common
3	Effect it will have on the process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formality of what already occurs • Need to train CL and A1 • Set-up workshop environment • Will add value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve all parties in one space • Need to break up workshop 	• different

	Finding	A1	A2	A1 vs A2
4	Possible impact of VM workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save time, resources and add direction • Speed up process • Enhance brief and solutions • Engage CLs and others, proactively, as a team • C would be able to solve business problems better • C would likely be more prepared 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speed up process • Enhance brief and solutions • Engage CL and others, proactively, as a team 	• common
5	Package sentiments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great concept • Significant utility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great concept • Significant utility • Sharing knowledge and insight early would be beneficial 	• common
6	Opportunities using VM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early allocation of resources • Set a clear path once – cheaper than changing while into the project • Final work truly collaborative • Enhance departure points for solutions • Initial contact – develops rapport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final work truly collaborative • Breakdown project into functions, will lead to better solutions. • Enhance departure points for solutions • Initial contact – develops rapport 	• common
7	CL involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowering for CL • Empowering for A1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empowering for CL • Empowering for A2 	• common
8	Sentiments of Facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good • Control participants • Set the project standard • Make path ahead clear • Take pressure off AM in creating a perfect brief • AM can assist with the solution rather than mediating • Unmotivated by solution and makes their function objective • Benefits outweigh costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good • Control participants • Set the project standard • Make path ahead clear • Take pressure off AM in creating a perfect brief • AM can assist with the solution rather than mediating • Unmotivated by solution and makes their function objective • Likely to mitigate situations where non-best solutions are selected. 	• common

Table 5.8. A VM briefing solution – concerns about a VM process

	Finding	A1	A2	A1 vs A2
1	Agency utility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not sure about viability at A1 • A1 too large – complicated (smaller agency more inclined) • Not enough time/resources • CLs already involved in the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not sure about viability at A2 • A2 too small (larger agency more inclined) • Not enough time/resources • Requires much effort 	• common
2	VM for briefing stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not totally convinced • Similar to kick-start 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much energy, only large jobs 	• different
3	Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st needs to be accepted by senior management and CL • Needs to show VM saves more time than it uses • Facilitator's task too large • Participants not always available – cannot stop A1 • CLs likely not participate • More research/information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not experienced this and so not prepared to make confident statements • Need to show VM saves more time than it uses 	• different
5	Views on CL's presence at brief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CL could shut down ideas • CL might withhold information • CL lack of availability/willingness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CL lack of availability/willingness 	• common

5.8. SUMMARY

Based on the discussion in this chapter, several things can be deduced. The current agency process is relatively common to both the smaller and larger agencies, which seems to be a common phenomenon, industry-wide. However, although the process has been the standard for years, there are issues with it, and rapid technological developments in recent years (as well as other current factors) have the potential to make these more apparent. All things considered, there are some factors that need to be appraised in order to increase a project's potential for success.

The theoretical problems that were identified were discussed and it was found that, within the industry, all nine problems exist. They also occur to varying degrees within agencies, however, this seems more related to the culture and character of the agency, rather than its size and complexity. It was also expressed that hybrid situations of the problems also occur, where many of the same elements re-emerge, but affect different factors. Thus, it could be stated that these key factors (most of which are found within the nine problem areas), encompass many of the issues within the advertising industry.

Finally, the concept of a VM briefing workshop to replace the current, linear briefing process was debated. It was found that it would be possible in large projects, where much communication and collaboration, if inputted early, would enhance solutions. However, some of the concerns pointed to the fact that VM has not been tested in the advertising industry, which introduces a new risk to which the participants were not prepared to commit themselves.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter concludes this research report and in so doing summarises the key points. It begins by restating the problem statement and validating its relevance. Then the research objectives are reviewed and the findings of the study stated. After which, the proposition is answered, and lastly, recommendations for future research are presented.

6.2. REVIEW OF THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

As reviewed by the literature in Chapter 2, the advertising industry faces problematic areas on three fronts. The first is the impact of technological developments. This has augmented the environment in which agencies operate, changing it dramatically from that of the past, in a very short period of time. The second pertains to issues that surround the internal operations of the agency (concerned mainly with reference to the individual players of an agency as a project team). The last deals with the inter-organisational relationship between the client and agency.

In Chapter 1, the problem statement was phrased:

Advertising agencies experience technological-developmental problems, internal agency problems and client-agency relationship problems, the results of which negatively impact projects by reducing value.

After exploring the case study research conducted by this study, it was evident that the findings, indeed, alluded to a problematic agency environment, which did impact on the project and results in a loss value. Furthermore, the nine problem statements which encapsulate the key problem areas (identified in Section 2.4), were considered to be accurate in describing the industry by the study participants.

Thus, it can be tentatively concluded that the issues, as identified by the problem statement, are present in the current advertising industry, and moreover, within the local South African advertising industry.

6.3. REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study looked at the problem statement, specifically focused towards understanding what the situation was within agencies based locally, i.e. in the Cape Town region. Then the agency situation was critically examined in terms of the potential effects VM would have, if applied to the advertising industry.

Pursuant to this, five research objectives were devised (see Chapter 1) and pursued. These research objectives are outlined in the following subsections, and are accompanied by relevant conclusions.

6.3.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1

Establish the nature and extent of the current briefing process in the advertising industry.

Agencies in South Africa, appear to follow a common workflow. The process that they follow is close to the theoretical one, which has been developed over years, and is similar across the industry, worldwide.

The pre-production process is a linear workflow, i.e. each stage in the process is sequential. It begins with a client need (that the agency can service) which is presented to the agency. After which the brief is rewritten, to an agency standard, by Account Management, who enters the brief into the agency. The brief is then checked and resources are attached in an endeavour to conceptualise the project creatively. The required work is then divided into the various departments. During this division, various meetings occur, ensuring clarity and correctness of work completed. These meetings also ensure that participants can raise any concerns with the brief and project, and are controlled by Account Management. If changes are required, the brief is updated to solicit the best realisable solution (within the allotted budget and time). The final stage is the presentation of work to the client.

It has been found that over the process some of the activities and events, that occur, are not efficient (the findings are summaries in Table 5.2). The process, however, continues to operate relatively well in the current industry environment.

Thus, Objective 1 has been achieved.

6.3.2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2

Determine the effectiveness of the current briefing process.

The effectiveness of the current process was a critical assessment point, as it analysed the process, to some degree, seeking out flaws which might be corrected. This objective elicited some internal grievances as well as praise for the process. The findings began to build the structure as to the perceived shortcomings of the process, and established areas that would benefit from this study.

This research objective was divided into sections. The first, a briefing process effectiveness section, assessed the brief until the point that it entered the agency. Within this sub-section it was concluded that, although attempts are made to assist the client, client briefs are not done well. Account Management then takes this work and redrafts it, but this activity does not follow a specific process and is subjective, which creates risk. This is all conducted in very little time.

Furthermore, Account Management consists of people with multi-disciplinary skills, who need to call on these skills to guide the client toward good solutions. This results in the quality of agency briefs ranging significantly between good and bad – and in bad situations, much time and resources are wasted. The effects of a 'bad' brief can often be established relatively late in the process, as there is no client sign-off (acceptance) of the brief, which adds further risk to the process.

The next section, dealing with meeting effectiveness, assessed the various meetings (until the end of the pre-production process – i.e. the client presentation). Within this sub-section, it was assessed that Creatives are not impressed with briefs and often do not read them, which is a waste of resources and time. They would like to be involved earlier, but, currently do not have the platform to do so.

Some problems that exist during the post-brief meetings include: deficient communication; 'silo-ed' disciplines (which separates the participants' understanding of one another's perspectives); and often required details are not present, primarily due to a lack of communication from clients or due to a deficiency in Account Management's ability to write the brief. These problems significantly affect project efficiency. However, clients, for the most part, are not welcome in agency post-brief meetings.

In situations where new ideas are shared and accepted, changes occur to the project scope. Such a change in scope during a project increases costs and agency pressures.

The last section, called peripheral noteworthy issues, documented any peripheral issues which were found and worthy of mention. It was established that the industry has changed significantly over a relatively short period of time. This change has affected agencies as many new clients have entered the market, however, even more new agencies have entered too. Agencies have, circumstantially, adapted their business model, becoming more concerned with profit-maximising, rather than creativity-optimising. As a result, best solutions are often not achieved due to cost and time reductions, which decreases client value, in an already price-sensitive environment.

There is unnecessary wastage, both within the agency and coming from external sources, which should be reviewed with the aim to enhance agency efficiency and organisation sustainability reasons.

Thus, Objective 2 has been achieved.

6.3.3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3

Establish what measures can enhance the current briefing process.

Some of the statements present during this research objective's findings were considered to be a lead to enhance the current process, and other statements were considered to validate the need and presence of certain activities.

It is preferable that the duration of an advertising project in today's agency environment to be between two and three weeks. It is also preferable that the process begins with a well-trained and well-informed Account Management who pro-actively guides the brief process efficiently, and where necessary, challenges the client's views. The resultant brief must be clear and detailed, and written in an exciting manner that will inspire the participants.

The relationship between client and agency must harbour trust and respect. It must also allow Account Management to be heard by the client, in a positive way, and open communication is encouraged. The stronger the relationship, the more collaborative. This often makes the sometimes necessary task of challenging a client, less formidable, which results in better solutions.

It was also noted that continued dissatisfaction, occurring on both sides, affects the client-agency relationship. Furthermore, participant responses indicate that this rarely stems from the brief. Dissatisfaction can, however, arise due to issues with time, negative conflict, deficient communication, and clients' not believing that they are receiving value.

Often, dissatisfaction can result in reworks. These cost significant time and resources for both client and agency, but are regarded normal within the industry. The most common causes of reworks include scope creep and a lack of clarity, regarding the work, among project participants.

Within the advertising industry, there are many measures that can be put in place in an attempt to diminish some of the identified issues. These, factors, if applied, would likely enhance the current process.

Thus, Objective 3 has been achieved.

6.3.4. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 4

Determine the presence of the identified problems in the South African advertising industry.

Many of the grievances within each respective process were noted to be common to both agencies and relatively similar to the identified theoretical problems. That these issues arise in multiple places reinforces the notion that these problems are prevalent within the agencies and industry. It also indicates that differing dynamics exist within these common problems.

The nine problem areas were examined, and the following tentative conclusions made:

Problem 1: The selection of creative solutions is based on organisational politics, individual status (i.e. the agency hierarchy), and aggressive campaigning of ideas. The selection should rather be based on the merits of the solutions themselves.

Larger agencies experienced this far more than smaller agencies, and it is characteristic of the industry. Parties who rally or canvas the loudest have a more significant impact on the projects. It is also recommended that if meetings were facilitated by an objective third party, it might likely mitigate this problem. This type of situation affects projects and agency's internal relationships, which may lead to conflict. If this situation is mitigated, it would likely result in solutions that are better than current solutions, due to open communication.

Problem 2: *Creatives are only included on projects after brief and strategy completion, giving them little latitude to enhance the project at a conception level. Creatives would enjoy contributing with their input early to impact the project conceptually. They do not have the opportunity, and thus they often do not buy-in to project solutions.*

Larger agencies experienced this far more than smaller agencies, and it is indicative of the industry. This problem apparently stretches agency-wide, rather than just to Creatives. There is a feeling that agencies do not operate as a team. As a result of a lack of communication, and the fact that project members are forced to operate within boundaries which are set without their input, there is a negative impact on the project's value. Allowing participants the opportunity to contribute to a project early, will empower them and enhance solutions.

Problem 3: *Different departments within agencies are increasingly insular as a result of different disciplines/backgrounds. This creates an 'us and them' mentality within the agency, where separate departments have vastly different ideas regarding goals and measures of success. This has a negative effect on projects.*

Larger agencies experienced this problem, whereas smaller agencies did not, and it is symptomatic of the industry. Often there is a group split within project teams, where individuals with similar functional-philosophies would team up against others (with differing functional-philosophies). This type of 'silo-ed' effect creates project team separation and impacts on the project and internal relationships. Furthermore, Creatives typically do not fully understand the client's overarching goals, and as a result their understanding of potential solutions does not take these factors into account. Thus, early, open, collective collaboration will realise better solutions.

Problem 4: *The agency is regarded as a supplier by clients rather than a partner or custodian of client brands. They require the agency to complete tasks assigned to them, and do not want to give the agency attention.*

Neither agency experienced this, however, it is believed to be present in the industry. Good client-agency relationships prevent this problem from occurring. However, agencies do often enter projects later than they would like. The agency is often not heard by clients. All of this affects the agency's ability to impact on projects and this can strain the relationship. This condition is believed

to be resolvable through communication, which develops trust, and therefore strong relationships, leading to better partnering and better solutions.

Problem 5: The client and agency, often, do not understand one another's intent and expectation. This occurs for both the project and wider relationship.

Larger agencies do not experience this problem, but smaller agencies do. It is considered symptomatic of the industry. Moreover, open communication and transparency, from both client and the agency, was found to be the resolution for this situation, by developing respect and trust.

Problem 6: There is a lack of communication between client and agency during early project stages, and as a good product can only be produced from good inputs, project quality is thus affected.

Both larger and smaller agencies experience this equally, and, further, it is considered characteristic of the industry. The inputs from clients are not strong, and where information is given it is often not done so openly. This lack of trust creates a deficient relationship between client and agency. Again, this comes back to early pro-active involvement, where free communication leads to a stronger relationship, which results in trust. Sharing information strengthens projects and enhances solutions.

Problem 7: Clients do not feel the agencies' contribution is value-for-money.

Neither agency experienced this, however, it was believed to be present in the industry. Although a lack of value for money was not experienced, dissatisfaction was (by both the client and the agency). This can be due to an array of reasons, all of which waste resources and time. The prevalent view is that clients will always consider agencies expensive, regardless of the situation, however, good solutions mitigate this (i.e. clients consider better solutions as better value for money).

Problem 8: Client's lack of respect of the agency results in a diminished creative quality of solution, which affects the project and relationship.

Both agencies found this to occur in their organisation, which is also indicative of the industry. If respect is not present from the client, the agency will not take ownership of the solution, and full agency buy-in will not occur, which can be

damaging to both the project and inter-organisational relationship. Thus, it was established that a good relationship, mutual respect and continual, open communication are fundamental to overcoming this problem. It was also found that communication needs to occur in a welcoming environment that encourages creativity.

***Problem 9:** As a result of an unresolved breakdown during a project, the client-agency relationship is affected, and ultimately trust between both parties is diminished.*

Larger agencies experience this problem, however, smaller agencies do not. It is, however, symptomatic of the industry. This was identified as the final stage in a string of problems between the agency and client. The solution is to steer clear of this final, and fatal problem by fostering an environment of trust, respect and continual communication. These efforts would result in a sturdy client-agency relationship where other (smaller) problems are minimised or expunged, offering a more forgiving domain in which to operate.

It can thus be assessed that, to varying degrees, the South African advertising industry does experience the theoretical problems identified in the literature.

Thus, Objective 4 has been achieved.

6.3.5. RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 5

Explore the potential effects VM would have on the briefing process in advertising projects.

It was assessed that the application of VM in advertising agencies is possible. Moreover, it was found to add value to the process. As smaller projects would not yield benefit from such a sophisticated construct, the application of VM to the agency environment would only be conducive to larger projects. However, the large agency believed that VM was more viable in a smaller agency, due to organisation complexity issues; and conversely, the smaller agency believed that it would operate better in a larger agency, due to the availability of more resources. Furthermore, VM was identified to require much resources and time.

The augmentation required to apply VM to the current agency process would only be slight. However, the VM process would have to be customised from the generic model, according to the industry's, agency's, and/or project's needs. In order to use the VM-included process, both the client and the agency would need to be trained, and an

effective environment established. VM's value would need to be proven before agencies would accept it.

Further, some identified advantages of the workshop includes: saving more time and resources than the current process; the enhancement of briefs as well as solutions; and better, more pro-active engagement of clients and other project members. It is also expected that, through the dissemination of information, early, the value team would be well prepared for the workshop – which would be an improvement over current meetings – and would assist in their solving more business problems. The value of VM would need to be 'sold' to clients, in order to get their buy-in and active participation.

The opportunities that VM presents to the agency include: the final work would be truly collaborative, which empowers individuals; an enhanced departure point for solutions, which sets a clear path from the start; and early contact, which develops a rapport among the value team.

Finally, facilitation was found to be a good idea, especially as facilitators are unmotivated by the solution and therefore are objective. Facilitators would ensure that all voices are given an equal platform. The facilitator would guide the process and participants, and would relieve significant pressure from Account Management. Further, a facilitator would also allow Account Management to participate in the solution (as opposed to merely mediating among the parties) during the various meetings.

Therefore, it seems evident that VM can offer strong opportunities to the advertising industry, where advantages, not present in the current process, could be gained and problems currently experienced could be reduced (or eliminated). Furthermore, VM offers the potential to add value to projects through cost-reduction and a value team-collaborated solution (which ensures universal buy-in), and might even deliver better solutions.

Thus, Objective 5 has been achieved.

6.4. REVIEW OF THE PROPOSITION

The guiding proposition, restated, is:

The use of VM during the briefing stage of advertising projects will positively influence such projects, through early guided collaborative efforts.

The findings have tentatively reflected that the use of VM during the briefing stage of advertising projects would enhance the experience through the pro-active involvement of the Value Team (rather than only Account Management drafting a brief). It has significant advantages, such as collaborative project team efforts, facilitated involvement during the early project stages, and open communication. Further, it was also revealed that the application of VM would utilise resources and time more effectively.

However, the application of VM to advertising projects should only be considered for large projects, where such collaboration and pro-active work is required.

Consequently, the proposition is affirmed, but with qualifications.

6.5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Three recommendations for future studies have emerged over the duration of this research report.

The first recommendation is that other locations in the world be assessed with reference to the merits of VM application in their advertising industries, for comparison. The second recommendation is that a larger sample size be taken, in order to reflect a more quantitative representation of their situation. Lastly, as this study has been limited with regards to the time and resources available to the researcher, it would be interesting to run a VM trial with real-world advertising agency projects, to realise some concrete results, which would strengthen the findings of this research report.

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ADDENDA

1. ADDENDUM 1: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Thank you for speaking to me. This is confidential. Do you mind that I record this?

Who are you? Position? What is your background? Why advertising?
Always ads?

How large is the agency – People? Industry?

1. PROCESS

- 1.1. What is the process – from client brief to creative solution sign-off – take me through it?
- 1.2. How long does it take (on S/M/L projects)?
- 1.3. Why is the process done like this? Once size fits all or are there alternative methods?
- 1.4. Is the system integrated with client and supply chain?
- 1.5. How do you identify the problem/needs of clients? When?
- 1.6. Is the briefing process effective?
- 1.7. What communication modes are used to reach the project team? Frequency?
- 1.8. How often do meetings occur – with client? Project team? Effective?
- 1.9. Are reworks ever done? When? Why? How costly is this?
- 1.10. How are ideas presented (internally/externally)? How are these shortlisted/selected?
- 1.11. Where does the highest cost occur? Is it spent effectively?

2. STAKEHOLDERS

- 2.1. Who are the stakeholders (int/ext)? When?
- 2.2. What are their roles? What makes them suited? Is this known by others?
- 2.3. How does each stakeholder add value to the process?

- 2.4. What is the expectation of input and output from – client of agency / agency of client? Fair?
- 2.5. Who creates the agency brief? Does it allow stakeholder feedback? Why?
- 2.6. Who is present at meetings? How are they conducted conducted / controlled / directed?
- 2.7. Do clients know what they want? Can they articulate this?
- 2.8. Are clients actively involved or do they want a solution, only? Client kind? Does it help?
- 2.9. Do clients understand the advertising industry/process? How sophisticated/mature? Loyalty?
- 2.10. Is the policy that client's word is final or does the agency challenge them? Effective? Why?
- 2.11. Do project teams feel heard (int/ext)? What forum? Effective?
- 2.12. Client/agency/project team committed to selected solutions? How is this chosen?
- 2.13. Does this affect the project? How?
- 2.14. Are clients satisfied with the creative solutions presented? Project delivery? Resources/Time?
- 2.15. Is there conflict – is this good or bad? When? How? Between who?

3. REFLECTION

- 3.1. What do you think the strengths and weaknesses about the process?
- 3.2. What do you think the strengths and weaknesses about the client?
- 3.3. What do you think the strengths and weaknesses about the agency/third-parties?
- 3.4. How do you feel about client brief quality? Can this be bettered, How?

2. ADDENDUM 2: QUESTIONNAIRES

VALUE MANAGEMENT (VM) APPLICABILITY TO THE AGENCY BRIEFING STAGE

- Please use the text-boxes to answer the questions (the text-boxes will enlarge as you type)
- Please make selection of options with a single mark
- You are encouraged to use point-form or summaries

1. BRIEFING PROCESS

1.1. Are client/agency briefs effective? How do you measure this?

1.2. Is it effective to have only one person drafting the brief? Why?

1.3. If the client does not know their own needs of a project, is the Account Manager equipped to deliver the best, objective, multi-disciplinary advice?

1.4. How often are reworks done? (% of projects)

1.5. How could these problems leading to a rework have been resolved earlier in the project?

0-20%		20-40%		40-60%		60-80%		80-100%	

1.6. Are clients ever dissatisfied? Why?

1.7. If identified earlier could this have been resolved/avoided? Is the brief ever to blame?

2. BRIEFING PERSONNEL

2.1. Should more of the project team be involved in the briefing process? Why?

2.2. Do you think this would make better creative solutions more probable? How?

2.3. What is your response to the idea of client involvement from project inception? Why?

definitely not		maybe not		neutral		maybe		definitely	

3. BRIEFING MEETINGS

3.1. Are brief meetings efficiently run? How do you measure this?

--

3.2. Do you believe that brief meetings provide a diplomatic forum where any individual's ideas can be shared? How do you measure this?

--

3.3. Who controls these meetings? Why?

--

3.4. How often does the scope of the project change during the brief meeting stage? (% of projects)

3.5. Why? Is this regarded a waste of resources and time?

0-20%		20-40%		40-60%		60-80%		80-100%	

4. GENERAL AGENCY PROBLEMS

4.1. Please mark where applicable (problems that you identify with a) the industry, and b) the agency) :

	problem	agency	industry
a.	Chosen solutions are based on agency politics, hierarchy & status or aggressive campaigning & not on the merits of the solution themselves.		
b.	Creatives would like to view their ideas and impact the project conceptually during briefing and strategy stages. However, they don't get the opportunity. This lack of consultation often leads to a lack of project buy-in from the creatives.		
c.	Insular departments result from different disciplines/background. This creates an 'us and them' mentality within the agency – separate departments have vastly different ideas regarding goals and measures of success. This has a negative effect on projects.		
d.	The agency is merely regarded as a "supplier" by clients, and one that requires little attention/care, and is not considered the client-brand custodian.		

	problem	agency	industry
e.	The client and agency are not at the same place of understanding nor expectation of one another in terms of their relationship and/or projects.		
f.	There is a lack of communication, during early project stages, between client and agency. This diminishes the potential for a high-quality creative solution.		
g.	Clients feel that agencies do not deliver value-for-money with projects.		
h.	A lack of respect from clients results in diminished creativity by the agency. This affects the project and the relationship.		
i.	Trust between the client and agency is not present.		

5. VALUE MANAGEMENT (VM)

5.1. Do you think the use of VM is possible in the advertising agency arena? Why?

yes		no	

5.2. What do you think about facilitated brief meetings?

--

5.3. What do you think about VM being used during the briefing stage of project?

--

5.4. Would this reduce any of the problems cited above? Which problems (state letters), & how?

--

5.5. Would this enhance the departure point for creative solutions? How?

--

WORKSHOP – AGENCY 1

ADVERTISING

1

PROBLEMS

- 4

HISTORY & SIMILARITIES

- 7

AGENDA

- 1

PROBLEMS

- 5

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES



AGENCY PROBLEMS

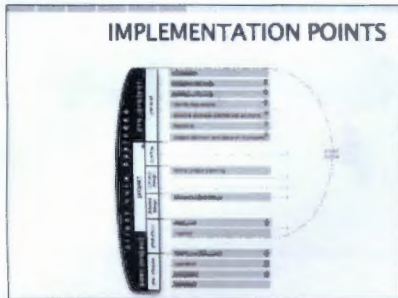
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VALUE MANAGEMENT

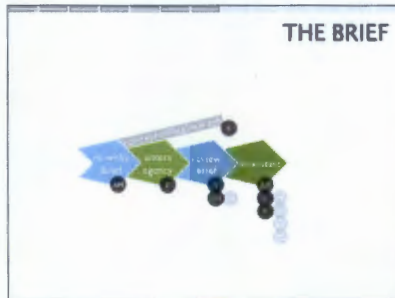
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IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

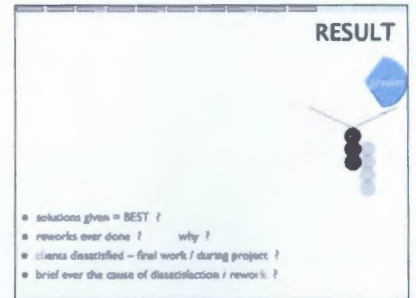
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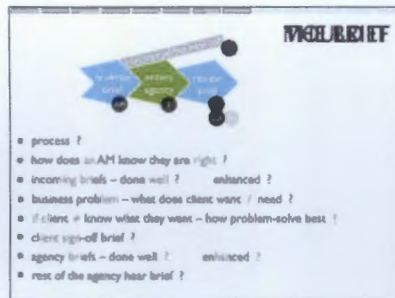
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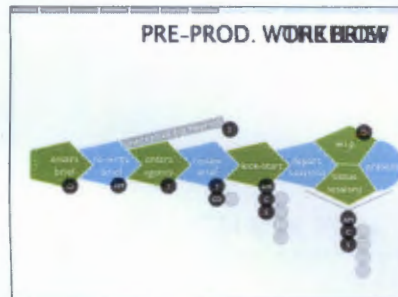
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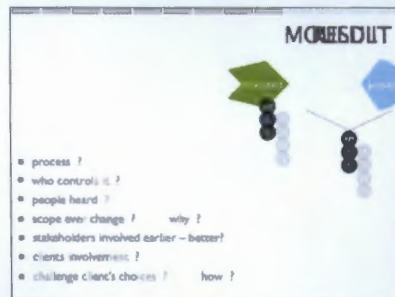
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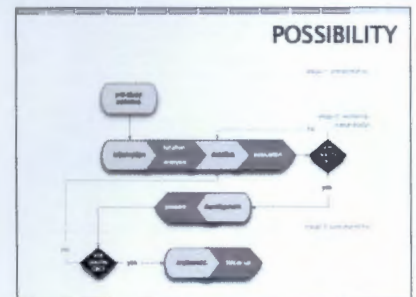
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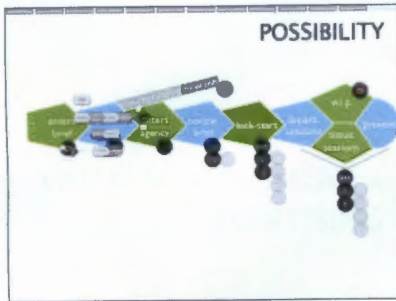


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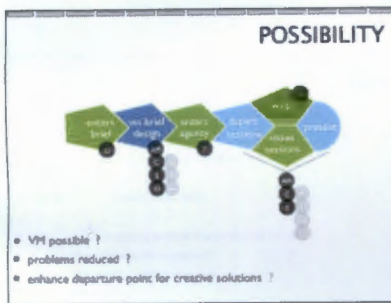


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APPENDIX 4: WORKSHOP – AGENCY 2



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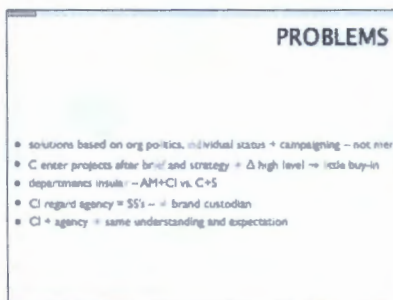
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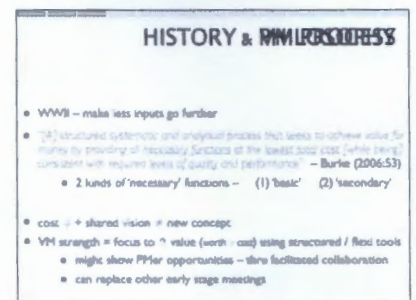
4. ADDENDUM 4: WORKSHOP – AGENCY 2



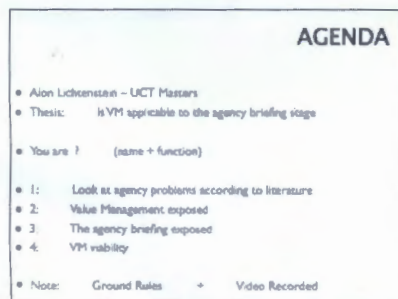
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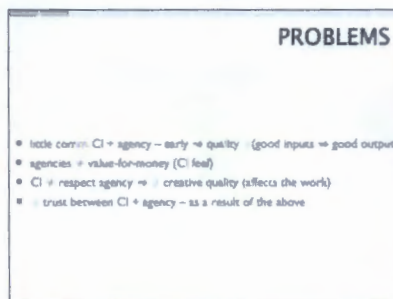
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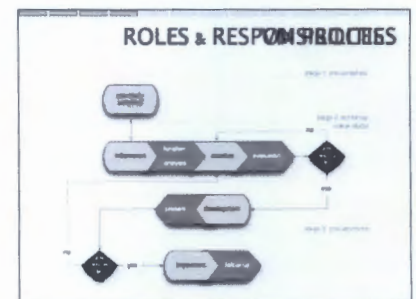
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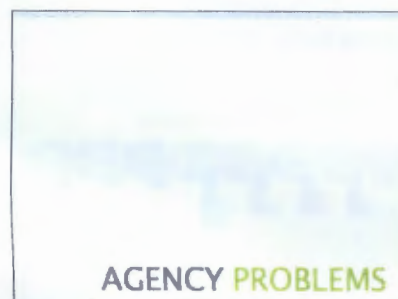
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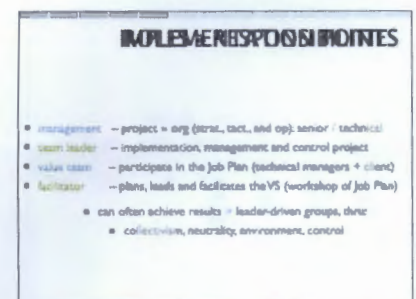
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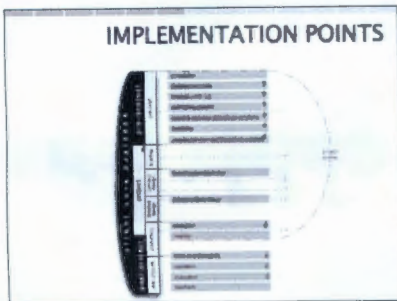
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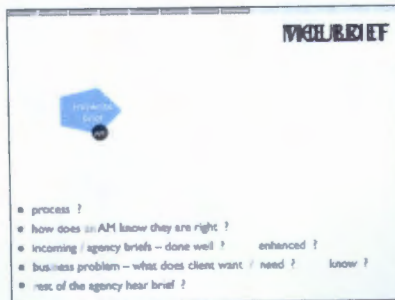
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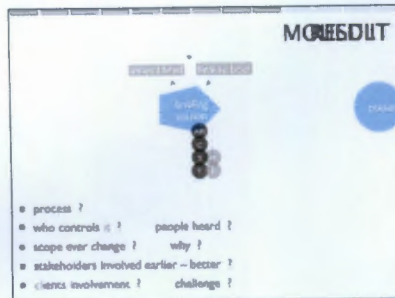
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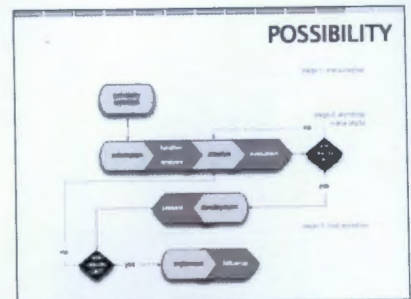
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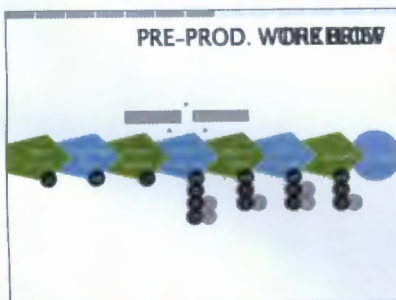
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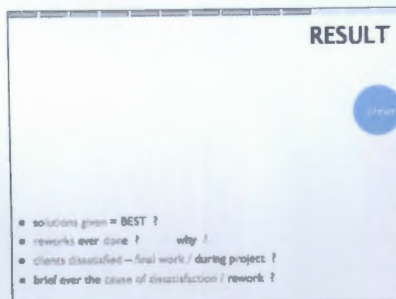
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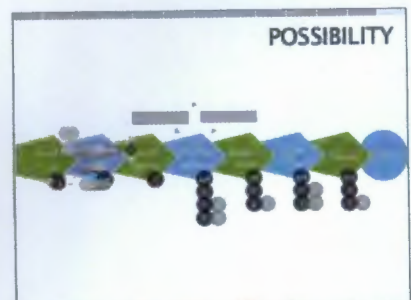
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12



15



18

POSSIBILITY

level 1 (a) one level design client's agency depart point client's agency resources solution

- VM possible ?
- problems reduced ?
- enhance departure point for creative solutions ?

19

THANK YOU.

20